

Helen M. Fallér

Nation,
Language,
Islam

*Tatarstan's Sovereignty
Movement*



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Tatarstan's Sovereignty Movement

Helen M. Faller



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Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language (Marx 1978: 595).

Unofficial Tatar National Anthem, based on the poem by Gabdullah Tukay (translated by the author)

Native Tongue

Oh native tongue, oh beautiful language, the language of my beloved father and mother!

I have learned many things in the world through you, native tongue.

At the very beginning with this language my beloved mother sang to me in the cradle,

Later on, through the nights my beloved grandmother recounted stories.

Oh native tongue! With your help from early childhood my joys and sorrows have always been understood.

Oh native tongue! In you my earliest prayers were made.

I said: Have mercy, my Lord, on me, and my beloved father and mother!

Tugan Tel

I tugan tel, i matur tel, ätkäm-änkämng tele!

Dön'iada küp närsä beldem sin tugan tel arkyly.

Ing elek bu tel belän änkäm bishektä köilägän,

Annary tönnär bue äbkäm xikäiat söilägän.

I tugan tel! Härvakytta iardämeng belän sineng,

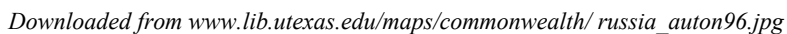
Kechkenädän anglashylgan shatlygym, kaigym minem.

I tugan tel! Sindä bulgan ing elek kyilgan dogam:

Iarlykagyl, dip, üzem häm ätkäm-änkämne, Xodam!



Map 2. Autonomous Areas of the Russian Federation



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Introduction

“In Germany I have a son. He has been living there with his children for two years,” the old woman explained to me in Russian, smiling broadly. She turned her head back towards the postal clerk sitting behind her window. The clerk, a Tatar woman in her twenties, took the pens and pencils out of the old woman’s package and passed them back to her through the narrow opening. “Only printed matter,” the clerk pronounced grimly from her seated position. The old woman bent over, putting her face close to the opening, and tried to catch the clerk’s eye. She beseeched her, “Just one? It’s good. It’s ours. It’s Soviet.” The postal clerk kept her eyes averted and shook her head.

Field notes, Kazan’s Central Post Office, 14 August 2000

This exchange demonstrates one of the central paradoxes of living in post-Soviet Russia, which is that while Soviet bureaucratic institutions are still in place, Soviet ideology has lost its persuasive appeal. The highly regulated bureaucracies the Soviet government created—the postal system, mass transit, banking, long distance trains, the passport regime—still operate according to strict Soviet-period rules. However, Soviet things possess little perceived merit and are especially unimportant to people of the postal clerk’s generation, who came of age during perestroika. Calling something “good” because it is “ours” and “Soviet” can no longer change circumstances or be employed to bend rigid rules towards felicitous outcomes.¹

This book is about the unmaking of Soviet people. It takes as its example a movement for political sovereignty (1990–2000) in the Russian autonomous republic of Tatarstan and examines its continuing social effects. Accepting the local interpretation that the post-Soviet revival of Tatar—a Turkic language—and Tatar culture in Tatarstan constitute part of a decolonization process, it illustrates how Tatar-speakers’ reality has changed since Mikhail Gorbachev, the last General Secretary of Communist Party of the Soviet Union, initiated his liberalizing reforms—perestroika or restructuring (1986–2001) and glasnost or openness (1985–1990).² It accepts as a truism that when colonized peoples engage in processes of decolonization, they draw their initial demands—which largely

concern reified aspects of their culture, such as national language, institutionalized religion, and genres of art—from within colonial frames of reference.³ Decolonization changes their subjective identities in ways they do not expect, with consequences they do not intend, illustrating Marx's precept that men (and women) cannot make history just as they please, haunted as they are by the spirits of the past, and reinforcing Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia, according to which every word is populated by someone else's intentions.⁴

Literature on the failed "transition" of socialist states demonstrates that, while the inhabitants of formerly socialist states can unmake previous social and political orders, they have been unable to transform their societies into the free market, capitalist states imagined by western advocates of neoliberalism.⁵ Thus, although the Tatarstan sovereignty movement neutralized much of the Russian cultural hegemony once prevalent in the Republic of Tatarstan, it was nonetheless constrained by social and political structures that prevented it from realizing its nation-building ambitions. Since 1986, Tatarstan's Tatar-speakers have undergone a revolutionary transformation that has caused them to view the world in ways profoundly different from Russian-speakers. Communication within Tatar social networks means that this transformation has affected even Tatars who don't have functional ability in the Tatar language, as well as Tatars who live outside Tatarstan. While nation-building failed to produce a sovereign state, it has had the unintended consequence of estranging Tatar-speaking Tatars from their Russian-speaking neighbors, colleagues, friends, and relatives.

Drawing upon terminology anthropologist Richard Handler used to analyze nationalism in Quebec, I describe the loosely defined group of sovereignty activists seeking to create change in Tatarstan and more broadly in the Russian Federation as "nation-builders."⁶ Perestroika provided Tatar-speakers an opportunity to openly oppose what they perceived as institutionalized discrimination against their national language and culture and to advocate for its end. The Soviet Union's subsequent collapse gave them a chance to create a society for their children more equitable than the one in which they grew up.

Tatarstan's nation-builders are educators, politicians, students, journalists, artists, and intellectuals. They constitute the Tatar *élite* of Kazan. Many are former communists, but like other ex-Soviets, decolonization has fundamentally transformed them in ways they didn't expect.⁷ Until Vladimir Putin became president of the Russian Federation in 1999, the politicians among them had fairly successfully brokered power sharing

with the central authorities in Moscow.⁸ In August 1990, the year before the Soviet Union collapsed, Boris Yeltsin visited Tatarstan and urged Russia's politics to "take all the sovereignty they could swallow."⁹ That same month, Tatarstan declared sovereignty and announced that the republic had two official government languages, Tatar and Russian. In 1992, Tatarstan adopted its own Constitution and in 1994 concluded a bilateral treaty upholding sovereignty with Moscow.

Based on the fundamental premise in linguistic anthropology that language not only describes and mediates but also creates reality, this book examines Tatar nation-builders, who are all Tatar-Russian bilinguals.¹⁰ It is not concerned with the experience of monolingual Russian-speakers in Tatarstan, but rather what is taking place there unheard and unperceived by Russians—that is, by people unfamiliar with Tatar discursive worlds—and the significance of that for Russia as a whole.

A Few Words about Publics

Scholars commonly define publics as groups of people who imagine themselves to constitute a unified, undifferentiated, homogenous whole. This belief emerges primarily from the theoretical work of anthropologist Benedict Anderson and sociologist Jürgen Habermas.¹¹ Anderson proposes that print media catalyze the development of national identity. Individuals living in different regions of a state read newspapers published in standardized national languages. As a result, it is assumed, they all imagine themselves belonging to the same undifferentiated nation.¹² While Anderson's theory purports to describe the development of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe, it has been freely applied to radically dissimilar contexts.

Habermas describes the emergence of a "public sphere" created by and accessible to the 18th-century European, primarily male, bourgeoisie, originating in and centered on coffeehouses, literary salons, and print media. Discourse in the public sphere promoted Enlightenment ideals of equality, human rights and justice, but was subsequently enfeebled by the growth of state capitalism and commercial mass media. Both theorists' approaches are culturally and historically particular. Their application to other times and places presumes that the experiences of literate, propertied, bourgeois European men are universal.

Moreover, Anderson's and Habermas's ideas about the development of national cultures rely on a simplified understanding of people's relation to

standardized languages.¹³ Both, for instance, assume that consumers of print media identify with a single standardized national language employed within a unified public sphere. The work of linguistic anthropologists on indexicality shows, however, that dissimilarly positioned speakers of a language will vary in their affective relations to it.¹⁴

Indexicality refers to the ways that speakers divide physical categories such as space and time, as well as social ones such as degrees of intimacy and rank through lexical terms such as *here*, *there*, *you*, *we*, *now* and *then*. These are differently structured in different languages, and thus cause speakers of different languages to parse the world in quite different ways.¹⁵ In the earliest recorded and perhaps best-known example of this phenomenon, anthropologist Franz Boas discovered that speakers of different languages perceived colors differently depending upon the color terms available in the languages they spoke.¹⁶ Whorfian effects, as linguistic anthropologist Michael Silverstein names the phenomenon in homage to the famous linguist, occur at the cognitive level, conjuring into existence a habitual thought world. Silverstein defines this as “a complex, emergent, partly analogically driven conceptual orientation that is absolutely ‘real’ to the people in whom it emerges.... We reveal and affirm this thought-world to ourselves each time we use fashions of speaking about matter in ‘space’ and ‘time,’ that is, every time we formulate a sentence.”¹⁷ In a multilingual society, it follows, the existence of different habitual thought worlds will make for the existence of multiple publics, loosely bound by the circulation of particular forms of discourse. But even when speakers of a particular language inhabit overlapping thought worlds, and so may seem to make a single public, individual variation in speech practices and life experiences will mean that no two thought worlds are completely identical. In bilingual situations, like the one in Tatarstan, speakers of the subordinate language are furthermore linked by their uneven knowledge of the hegemonic language. Not quite part of the same public that represents monolingual Russians, because their knowledge of Russian varies, neither do they comprise a unitary group. This places them in different relations not only to Russian-speaking Russians but also to other, variably competent, russophone Tatars.

Assuming the existence of habitual thought worlds, I explore another means by which language influences how people see the world. Instead of examining the ways grammatical categories structure quotidian life, I focus on discursive worlds and the multiple, variegated publics they more or less encompass. My research reveals that increasing the number and breadth of the domains for doing things in a subordinate language can

make for a divergence in the discursive worlds inhabited by speakers of that language from those of people who only speak the hegemonic language.¹⁸ As the arena of available activities in the Tatar language expanded, greater communication occurred across previously existing boundaries, and this changed Tatar-speakers' worldviews, particularly their conceptions of national difference.

Building upon other criticisms of Anderson's work, I hold that the ways in which Tatars imagine their nation territorially, religiously, and linguistically fluctuates as much as other aspects of their identities.¹⁹ In particular, I take issue with Anderson's assertion that nations are imagined "as both inherently limited and sovereign" defined by "finite, if elastic, boundaries."²⁰ For all their concern with sovereignty, Tatar nation-builders do not consider their nation to be limited by finite boundaries. My research suggests that Anderson's model of the nation is incorrect, not only for "the Tatar nation," which does not fit Europe's historical trajectory of development, but for all nations. And here is why. First, the boundaries delimiting any group of people are always both permeable and subject to significant change over time.²¹ Second, the processes whereby the social groups we call nations come into being and perpetuate their existence are fraught with tension, uneven, and always incomplete. For these reasons, defining a nation or public in any kind of sustained way is not possible. Third, groups imagined as homogenous contain internal differentiation with respect to social position, gender, class, region of origin, age, ethnicity, education, political views, profession, sexual orientation, race, and so on. Members of that group consequently read, or otherwise interpret information available to them, variously. That is, publics are always multiple and fragmented, even when they represent speakers of the same language.²² Fourth, half the people in the world are bilingual, which means that they may not feel affiliated with just one language.²³ Fifth, Anderson's approach promotes an unsophisticated view of people who, though they consider themselves as belonging to the same nation, often recognize and even promote internal diversity.

Historical Background

Tatarstan's capital, Kazan, is located on the confluence of the Volga and Kama Rivers. Situated like Rome atop seven hills lush with greenery, Kazan is a little over 600 miles southeast of Moscow, in the European part of Russia to the west of the Ural Mountains. It has been inhabited for

more than 1,000 years, according to recently unearthed archaeological evidence. This discovery makes Kazan significantly older than Russia's two leading cities—Moscow by 200 years and St. Petersburg by over 700 years—which Tatars view as a point in favor of their civilized status.²⁴

Before Russia colonized the region, Kazan was the center of the Kazan Khanate (1438–1552), a daughter state of the Golden Horde twice the size of present-day Tatarstan.²⁵ Kazan Tatars claim descent from the city-state of Bolgar, now an archaeological site 100 miles south of Kazan. Bolgar was occupied by Turkic-speaking Muslims from at least the 10th through the 13th centuries, when, in 1230, Chingis Khan's Great Horde invaded from the east.²⁶ Claiming descent from Bulgars is significant because it defines Tatars as both European and as indigenous to the region they currently inhabit, and not invading newcomers descended from troops in Chingis Khan's army and Asian, as Russians often allege. In 922, influenced by the missionary work of Ahmad ibn Fadlan, Bulgars converted to Islam—Tatars imply that it was a mass conversion—and began writing in Arabic script.²⁷ When speaking of medieval Tatar history, Tatar Muslims do not hesitate to point out that they became monotheists 66 years before Prince Vladimir of Kiev adopted Orthodox Christianity. Even though up to 10% of Muslim Tatars had converted to Orthodoxy by the time of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the majority of present-day Tatars nevertheless iconically equate Islam with Tatariness.²⁸

After Chingis Khan died, his sons cooperatively established a state, known as the Golden Horde, that ruled Eurasia for approximately 250 years. The Golden Horde's official religion became Islam, though the state tolerated other faiths.²⁹ Moscow developed dynamically under Golden Horde rule, accumulating political power and wealth, a result of its success in exacting taxes for the government from other Russian city-states.³⁰ When the Golden Horde collapsed, several daughter states, including the Kazan Khanate, continued to receive taxes sporadically from Russian principalities, though wars were chronic among the Golden Horde daughter states. This changed in 1552, when Ivan the Terrible, Prince of Muscovy, detonated a bomb in Kazan, according to an eyewitness, and captured the city.³¹

Ivan IV razed Kazan and put to death every Kazanian he could find.³² He instituted a policy of forced conversion to Orthodox Christianity and decreed that the remaining Muslims be removed from Kazan or drowned.³³ His conquest was part of an effort to expand the Principality of Muscovy, for once Ivan had conquered Kazan, and subsequently Astrakhan, in 1556, he declared himself Tsar of All Russia.³⁴ Although, at a

later date, the Russian state claimed religious reasons for conquering Kazan, at the time of conquest the Middle Volga region's primary attractions were economic.³⁵ Perceived ethnic differences based upon linguistic knowledge were not incorporated into the historiography of Kazan's demise until the 19th century.³⁶

National Categories in Socialist States

The Soviet Union was a vast territory that spanned 11 time zones. The work the Bolsheviks needed to accomplish in order to make administrative decisions about how to divide and govern that territory after the October 1917 revolution was likewise vast. At the outset, Soviet administrative policies were deeply influenced by two basic precepts of Marxian thought. The first precept was that human social organization develops along a single universal path of social evolution, while the second proposed that nations are the fundamental unit of human social organization, with some classified as "great historic nations" and others as unviable, small, and lacking their own history.³⁷

Beginning in 1924, the Soviet authorities employed linguists, ethnographers, and statisticians in the state-building process of categorizing people living in the Soviet Union by nationality. This required intellectuals to reconceive imperial bureaucratic categories, which had been imposed on the basis of religion and native language, and to decide which groups actually constituted a nationality and which should be absorbed into a neighboring group. Creating the Soviet nations and nationalities that would comprise the USSR required the tidy categorization of an untidy reality: Soviet ethnographers had to schematize the patterned but nonetheless changing practices that comprised people's everyday lives. One thing remained constant, however: as peoples came to be identified with nations, and as nations required national languages as essential components of their national culture, languages came to stand for nations.³⁸

The practices that came to identify differences among official national cultures included life rituals, such as those performed at funerals, births, and particularly marriages; aspects of material culture, such as clothing, types of abode, and various kinds of utensils and tools; and forms of art, such as literary genres, music, and theatre. The codification of national languages was essential to this process of differentiation. For Turkic peoples, slight differences in speech patterns, dress, musical genres, and other potential expressions of social status and personhood came to indicate the

existence of different nations, much as clinal variation in human morphology has historically been perceived racially.³⁹

While at first the trend was to create a proliferation of nationalities, by the late 1930s this had turned into an officially sanctioned effort to absorb smaller groups into larger national-territorial units.⁴⁰ The result was somewhat paradoxical. Soviet nations were conceived according to a western European model which granted them language, territory, and history, but denied them statehood.⁴¹ As historian Francine Hirsch points out, fitting Soviet people into a comprehensive conceptual framework with national, territorial, and standardized linguistic boundaries gave rise to nationalism where it previously did not exist.⁴² Nineteenth-century European nations were built on speakers of what seemed (though weren't actually) common languages living within the same territorial state borders.⁴³ By contrast, 20th-century Soviet nations emerged from processes that divided people living within one state in ways that helped to maintain Russian hegemony. Moreover, national membership was complicated by state policies that, in the words of sociologist Rogers Brubaker, "established nationhood and nationality as fundamental social categories sharply distinct from the overarching categories of statehood and citizenship."⁴⁴

The Soviet Union was eventually determined to consist of 15 union republics, with each union republic containing numerous autonomous republics and regions. The borders the state drew caused many Soviets to live outside their titular national territories.⁴⁵ The Russian Republic was granted 89 autonomous polities, among which Tatarstan remains one. Autonomous republics were a level lower in the Soviet administrative hierarchy than union republics, which was the status of Russia itself and the other 14 republics that became "independent states" after the USSR's collapse.

During the process of nation formation in the 1920s, some Kazan activists sought to have Tatarstan declared a union, rather than an autonomous, republic. Contemporary Tatar politicians claim that, in making Tatarstan an autonomy, Soviet authorities split the Tatar population between Tatarstan and Bashkortostan—the autonomous republic on Tatarstan's eastern border—to prevent Tatarstan from becoming too powerful a polity.⁴⁶ Before the Soviet Union dissolved at the end of 1991, Tatar nation-builders tried once more to elevate Tatarstan's status to that of a union republic, again without success.⁴⁷ They also suggested uniting the two republics territorially to strengthen their joint ability to make political claims against the government in Moscow and appeals to the outside world, but Bashkortostan declined.

Early Soviet nationalities policies were remarkable for simultaneously promoting diversity and demanding conformity.⁴⁸ The USSR created “national cadres”—non-Russian intellectuals and bureaucrats to occupy posts in the newly created state structure—in a process called *korenizatsiia* [rooting]. Then, it arrested or shot members of these national cadres who did not follow the state’s dictates closely enough. It promoted the fluorecence of non-Russian language varieties and then took measures to cut the number of schools teaching them.

Each Soviet citizen carried an internal passport listing his or her nationality, which was supposed to be based on “mother tongue,” imbuing nationality with bureaucratic, and hence political, form in daily life.⁴⁹ As Brubaker notes, in every bureaucratic encounter, whether it was borrowing a library book or purchasing a bus ticket or applying for a job, Soviet citizens had to present their internal passports and have the information in them, including their nationality, noted down.⁵⁰ Soviets thus received constant reinforcement of themselves as members of a particular nationality. All the same, beginning in the 1960s, the Soviet state took steps to discourage national particularism, marked by ethnographers’ sudden employment of the term “ethnos” to refer to groups of Soviet people.⁵¹

Under Soviet rule, Russia’s 89 internal polities were required to hand over much of their foodstuffs and other resources to the central government in Moscow, while few expenditures were made to maintain the infrastructure of the regions, as they came to be called.⁵² When perestroika began, several regional polities tried to negotiate the retention of some locally generated revenues from industries (oil and car manufacture in Tatarstan) and taxes in order to reinvest them locally. Because the most assertive of these polities were the official territories of titular nationalities, efforts by the regions to negotiate economic self-rule became ethnically colored.

Soviet economic domination was matched by a program of cultural control. Resources for Tatar national schools declined sharply during the Soviet period. There were 31 such schools in Kazan in 1917, but, by 1945, only two remained. By 1990, there were none to which parents who cared about their children’s future would choose to send them. Tatar-language education was confined to villages and there was a stigma against speaking the language outside Tatar villages, the bazaar, or the domestic sphere (as variously defined).

At the same time, as “Soviet” lost much of its staying power as a supra-ethnic identity marker, identification according to the already-existing category of nationality became more salient. Though ex-Soviets began to

express opinions that would have been previously inexpressible, they nevertheless tended to view relations between social groups using Soviet categories of analysis—as most fundamentally between nations or peoples. Post-Soviet nationalisms do not reveal the existence of age-old ethnic rivalries, but rather emerge from structures of feeling constructed by Soviet nationality policies.⁵³ The social evolutionary theories of Marx and Engels continue to permeate post-Soviet thinking about the relationships between levels of civilization, language, and nation.

In post-Soviet Russia, people who call themselves Russian, especially those living in urban centers, may treat adherence to a national identity as if it were evidence of backwardness. By contrast, in the provincial capital where I carried out my research, nationality remains an extremely important, perhaps even the most important, identifier of who a person is.⁵⁴ Indeed, Kazanians who have suffered discrimination as a result of their minority nationality status—especially Tatars and Volga Germans—possess a heightened awareness of nationality as an essential identity category.⁵⁵

Tatarstan Sovereignty

In 1989, according to the Soviet census, Tatarstan's population was 3.6 million (one million in Kazan). Of this number 48.5% were Tatars, while Russians comprised the republic's second largest nationality at 43.3%, followed by single-digit percentages of Chuvash, Ukrainians, Mordvins, Udmurts, Mari, and Bashkirs. Tatars became a majority in the republic, accounting for 52% of the population in 2001, when the percentage of Russians was estimated at 42%.⁵⁶ The 2002 All-Russian Census attests that Tatarstan's population grew to nearly 3.8 million, with Tatars making up 53% of the population, while Russians dropped to 39%.⁵⁷ These statistics are significant because they show that, along with Russian out-migration, Tatarstan policies facilitating the repatriation of people originally from Tatarstan seem to have made an impact.⁵⁸

Following its declaration of sovereignty in 1990, in 1991, Tatarstan's leadership refused to accept the legitimacy of the Russian Federation's presidential elections. Only 36.6 % of Tatarstan's eligible voters participated in the election that made Boris Yeltsin Russia's president, while over two-thirds turned out to elect Mintimir Shaimiev president of Tatarstan.⁵⁹ In 1992, under pressure from the Moscow government, which was sure that sovereignty wouldn't enjoy support among Tatarstan's majority

Russian population, Tatarstan held a popular referendum on sovereignty. The Tatarstan electorate was asked to respond “yes” or “no” to the following question:

Do you agree that the Republic of Tatarstan is a sovereign state, the subject of international law, forming its relations with the Russian Federation and other republics and states on the basis of legal agreements?

To many people’s surprise, 61.2% of voters supported the measure, even though Moscow carried out fear-inducing media blitz propaganda campaign declaring that a “yes” vote would result in civil war and, on polling day, the Russian army carried out demonstrative tank maneuvers along Tatarstan’s borders, while the Russian air force dropped leaflets from overhead.

In addition to ratifying its Constitution in 1992 and concluding a bilateral treaty with Moscow in 1994—which some nation-builders considered an unnecessary concession—, Tatarstan forged economic agreements with foreign states. During sovereignty, the strength of Tatarstan’s government and its concrete, if sometimes corrupt, efforts to improve life for people in the republic caused everyone who lived there to experience life differently from people elsewhere in Russia. This difference was visible as soon as one crossed into Tatarstan, for example, by the fact that public spaces like bus terminals and fences were suddenly covered in fresh paint, in contradistinction to the typically unrelenting drabness of rural Russia.

In 1994 the Russian government discovered that Tatarstan was only transmitting 6–7% of locally collected taxes to the center, instead of the 30% earmarked for the federal budget.⁶⁰ In 2000—his first year as Russia’s President—Vladimir Putin came to Kazan during the annual Sabantuy celebrations in June and held a 24-hour-long closed-door meeting with Tatarstan President Mintimir Shaimiev and Bashkortostan President Murtaza Rahimov. According to a source close to Shaimiev, Putin threatened to “discover wahabbists” on the two presidents’ territory, which he would use as justification for “making a Chechnya” out of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, unless both republics relinquished their adherence to the power-sharing agreements they had concluded with Moscow in 1994. Whatever actually happened behind those closed doors, Tatarstan immediately agreed to cede at least 50% of the revenues generated on its territory to Moscow, which, as in Soviet times, were not redistributed back to the republic.⁶¹

During his tenure as president, Putin implemented a number of centralizing measures that applied equally to all Russia’s 89 regions. These in-

cluded “harmonizing” regional constitutions and laws to comply with the Russian Federation’s, even when their adoption predated Russia’s, as was the case with the Tatarstan Constitution; placing local publications, distilleries, and regional secret police, who have heightened their surveillance, under Moscow’s direct control; and making regional presidents, such as Mintimir Shaimiev, who had previously been popularly elected, his appointees.⁶² Beyond this, Putin directed special measures at Tatarstan, namely his demand that Tatarstan’s 1994 bilateral treaty with Moscow be annulled. As a result, Tatarstan had to renegotiate its status vis-à-vis Russia’s central government in a new treaty finally signed in July 2007 after years of heated debate.

The new agreement refers to the 1992 referendum as a basis for the original 1994 treaty, but doesn’t contain the word sovereignty. It states that the Republic of Tatarstan is a subject of the Russian Federation, which will conclude agreements jointly with the Russian Federation regarding Tatarstan’s economy, environment, and culture. It grants Tatarstan the right to pursue relations with international organizations “in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in accordance with the procedure established by the Government of the Russian Federation” and Tatarstan citizens the right to a special insert in their domestic passports bearing the Tatarstan State Seal.

While political scientist Katherine Graney maintains that Tatarstan government officials’ continuing ability to negotiate with Moscow provides evidence that sovereignty is still alive, I hold that Tatarstan sovereignty as a popular movement no longer exists and that Tatarstan nation-builders’ aspirations have become largely denuded of political thrust.⁶³ My claim that sovereignty is dead reflects the perspective of once-hopeful Tatar-speakers whom I consulted after 2001 about the effects of Putin’s visit and the subsequently renegotiated political relations with Moscow. When asked what changes had occurred to sovereignty, they responded that sovereignty no longer existed.

Since the Soviet Union’s collapse, a shift in the status of Tatarstan’s two primary languages and consequent changes in the rules that dictate which language interlocutors should use in interactions have taken place. As long as sovereignty held sway, the pragmatic use of Tatar was perceived as necessary for navigating bureaucratic structures. During that time, the stigma against speaking Tatar lifted. People who did not know any Tatar during the Soviet period often studied it—government bureaucrats, university students, and school children—but didn’t employ their minimal knowledge outside the classroom. Even so, the number of do-

mains in which people spoke Tatar without fear of harassment expanded—including universities, schools, government ministries, shops, sidewalks, restaurants, and museums. Passive speakers activated their linguistic knowledge and active speakers of Tatar came to feel comfortable using the language in all domains.

Even though sovereignty elevated the status of Tatar language and the domains in which Tatar is spoken have increased since the Soviet period, Russian nonetheless remained more widely used in schools, media, and other public domains. The overwhelming majority of media consumed by children, even those studying in Tatar classes, is exclusively in Russian and Russian is the hegemonic language in Kazan schools, even in Tatar classrooms. Though Tatar teachers delivered their lessons to students in Tatar, most conversations among Tatar children at school occurred in Russian. All the same, when speaking Russian to each other, children inserted phrases and made jokes in Tatar. These speech patterns created a certain kind of solidarity among them that they couldn't share with their monolingual Russian schoolmates. Thus, the introduction of new Tatarstan ideologies complicated an already-existing two-tiered system of national identification, so that children came to identify with nations as peoples, for example, Tatars or Russians, as well as with territorial governments, that is, Tatarstan or Russia.⁶⁴

Categories of People

In the 2002 All-Russia Census, nearly 80% of the Russian Confederation's population stated that it was Russian, while about 4% chose Tatar as their nationality. Of Tatars living in Russia as a whole, 81% claimed knowledge of Tatar language, as opposed to 0.1% of Russians. Almost 100% of Russians in Russia reported fluency in the Russian language, compared to 96% of Tatars. In Tatarstan, 99% of Russians and 93% of Tatars claimed fluency in Russian. The figures for Tatar language are 4% and 94%, respectively.⁶⁵ A combined total of 53% of Tatarstan's 3.8 million population—including Russians, Tatars, Käräshens (Christian Tatars), Chuvash, Bashkirs, Mordvins, Mari—affirmed that they knew the Tatar language.⁶⁶

One of the core features of Tatarstan's post-Soviet sociolinguistic field is a fundamental asymmetry between Tatar-speakers and non-Tatar-speakers, which defies attempts to think of Tatarstan language communities as bounded units. In the late 1990s, about half of Tatars in Tatarstan

spoke Tatar at some level, with fluency rates higher in villages than in cities.⁶⁷ Nearly all Tatars are functionally bilingual in Russian. The percentage of “Russians” in Tatarstan claiming to know Tatar rose to 4% in 2002 from 3% in 2001 and only 1.5% in 1991.⁶⁸ This asymmetrical distribution of linguistic proficiency stems from the fact that participation in Soviet and (subsequently Russian) society requires the ability to communicate in Russian. Consequently, Tatar-speakers possess cultural knowledge of the world inhabited by monolingual Russian-speakers, even if their knowledge of that world is not deep. By contrast, monolingual Russian-speakers frequently do not even perceive and certainly rarely acknowledge the world around them transpiring in Tatar and other low-status languages. The result is that bilingual Tatars are part of a Russian language community, while the converse is not true.

Aware that sociolinguistic categories, such as language and speech communities, are constructed out of the messy variability of social interaction, I nevertheless attempt to classify speakers.⁶⁹ Therefore, when I use the term “Tatar-speaker,” I am referring to bilingual Tatar-Russian speakers who self-identify as Tatar. Just as mapping people’s national identity is difficult, so is comparatively gauging their level of bilingual ability.⁷⁰ Tatars generally say that “to know Tatar” is to be fully conversant in Tatar quotidian speech and literary language. Since the domains in which Tatar and Russian are spoken in Kazan—where most tasks cannot be accomplished speaking Tatar language—are not socially equivalent, bilingualism cannot be judged by the ability to engage in the same kinds of linguistic exchanges in both languages. Consequently, my evaluation of whether a person is Tatar-speaking or not is based upon limited observation and self-reporting. Bilingualism often becomes a topic of ideological discourses about linguistic purism, as many Tatar-speakers say they are not fully bilingual because they do not know Tatar literary language, only everyday speech. Connected to this difficulty in categorizing speakers is the problem of separating passive from active bilinguals. Even though an unknown number of Kazanians have activated their previously passive knowledge of Tatar language over the past 25 years, it is not clear to what extent or how frequently they use this knowledge.

When I use the term “Russian,” I am primarily referring to monolingual Russian-speakers who identify as Russian by nationality. Like “bilingualism,” however, this is messy as many, if not all, “Russians” descend from multiple and variegated backgrounds, some of which include strong “Tatar” influence.

Tatarstan Russians and Tatars do not belong to culturally distinct groups of people, that is, they do not occupy separate cultural fields or even social networks. However, since perestroika, people who identify as “Tatar” have been taking steps to figure out what that means. Partially as an attempt to distance themselves from the chaos and hopelessness of daily life in post-Soviet Russia, they have practiced being Tatar through trying to speak Tatar and pressuring other people to speak it, by reviving Muslim practices, as they understand them, and by embracing idealized Tatar social relations and cultural practices.⁷¹ The result of these repeated processes is that what it means to be “Tatar” in Kazan is becoming increasingly different from what it means to be “Russian.”

Like most everyone, Tatars tend to perceive the world as divided between “us” and “them.” These divisions become differently configured depending upon subject position, setting, and the kind of solidarity being emphasized at a particular moment.⁷² Tatars, like other Soviets, subscribe to an ideology which posits that a person’s “native language” is the standard national language ascribed to his or her nation. Consequently, divisions between the Self and Other are often made along lines of perceived native language. Perceived religion also becomes a boundary-creating device. Certainly, neither religion nor language determines national culture. Nonetheless, the discursive worlds Tatarstan people inhabit are differently configured depending upon whether Tatar or Russian is their primary language of orientation and affiliation. At the same time, while Tatarstan’s Tatar-speaking, ethnic Tatar, and Muslim communities overlap, they do not encompass a single group of people.

Definitions

Throughout this book, “nation-building” refers to what is elsewhere called patriotic nationalism, civic nationalism, or statism, based on participation in democratic institutions, while “nationalism” refers to exclusionary nationalism based on perceived ethnicity.⁷³ Nation-builders therefore are people engaged in creating inclusive Tatar and/or Tatarstan nationalism. “Sovereignty” is a slippery term, worthy of its own treatise.⁷⁴ At sovereignty’s height as a movement, approximately 1989–1992, when Tatars engaged in daily mass protests in Freedom Square, Tatar sources employed the term interchangeably with “independence.” During my fieldwork in 1997–2001, Kazanians used sovereignty to describe Tatarstan nation-building efforts and the right to national self-determination Vladi-

mir Lenin had proposed in 1914.⁷⁵ In 2000, when President Putin began to exert pressure on Tatarstan to succumb to his dictates, many former supporters of sovereignty began to ask aloud, “What has sovereignty done for me?” In that context, sovereignty referred to the special circumstances existing in Tatarstan vis-à-vis its relationship to Russia. When I returned to Kazan in 2006, what sovereignty meant was no longer disputed—it was generally agreed to no longer exist.

Research Methods

Since 1997, I have made seven trips to Tatarstan, spending approximately 18 months there, primarily in Kazan. In addition, I visited other sites, including Tatar villages, Tatarstan’s post-industrial city Yar Chally, a few Tatarstan towns, the archaeological site of Bolgar, Ufa, the capital of Bashkortostan, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and several dachas owned by russophone Tatar friends.⁷⁶ In order to develop a broad understanding of prevailing attitudes, I cultivated relationships with people who represented different positions in Tatarstan’s sociolinguistic field and thus held varying opinions of Tatarstan sovereignty.

During my most intensive research period (1999–2001), I concentrated on studying how nationalist ideas were being transmitted by the Tatarstan government through bilingual education. I spent most of my time in Kazan classrooms observing the circulation of the language ideologies that emerged in connection to teaching the Tatar language to schoolchildren and to adult government bureaucrats improving their qualifications. I worked mainly in three schools: the Lab School—a demanding, university preparatory school with gifted students from families of limited means, including refugees from Central Asia; the English School—a specialized school in English instruction filled with elite children from families with extensive financial and political resources; and the Jewish School—a school established in the late 1990s which receives funding from the Israeli government where children—90% of whom are Jewish—learn Hebrew, Israeli history, and intellectual, cultural, and social values that the local community considers Jewish.⁷⁷ These schools are grooming grounds for Tatarstan’s future leaders. I likewise spent time in ordinary schools for ordinary children of all nationalities and a special Tatar gymnasium. I visited many other schools and educational institutions in the region and frequently attended scholarly conferences on education, bilingualism, Russian federalism, and other topics. I attended dissertation defenses and

worked extensively in the archives of the Tatarstan National Library, the Kazan State University Library, and the Library at Kazan's Institute for Language, Literature, and Art. I conducted formal interviews with Tatarstan nation-builders and activists of Russian, Jewish, and German nationality, which I usually tape-recorded or videotaped, as well as less formal interviews with people who were not public figures. I attended public celebrations of May Day, Memory Day (which marks Ivan the Terrible's capture of Kazan), the Tatarstan holiday Sabantuy, the birthday of the Tatar national poet Gabdullah Tukay, a Russian funeral, and political meetings held by local Tatarstan candidates before the 2000 elections.⁷⁸ I visited numerous museums. I became well acquainted with the ethnographers at the Tatarstan Academy of Science's Institute of History. I gathered information from Internet list-serv exchanges, blogs, and Tatarstan websites.

In the schools where I conducted research, I observed Tatar-language lessons, history and literature lessons, and hallway and cafeteria interactions. Because of the high symbolic and real capital associated with knowledge of English in the former USSR, Kazan school officials agreed to allow me access to schoolchildren if I provided regular instruction in conversational English. I used the English lessons as an opportunity to conduct weekly interviews with the children and perform simple experiments designed to elicit racial ideologies.⁷⁹ I also surveyed adults and children on the domains in which they use different languages and developed a matched guise test to numerically evaluate children's language attitudes that I ran with some 200 Russian and Tatar children in the Lab School, the Jewish School, and a non-specialized high school. In addition to conducting research in classrooms, I spent time with Tatar teachers in their staff rooms and lunch rooms gathering information on their attitudes towards Tatarstan sovereignty and other related issues.⁸⁰

Because I speak fluent Tatar in addition to Russian, I became something of a local celebrity. Newspapers, radio, magazines, and television interviewed me on several occasions (the headline often read something like "American Speaks Tatar!"). I was asked to give a paper on the state of bilingualism in the US at a conference at Kazan's new Tatar University and to contribute scholarly articles in Tatar to local publications. I received endless, generous invitations to people's homes, visiting pupils and teachers during holiday celebrations, and was a frequent visitor to half a dozen Tatarstan households, observing both secular and religious—Muslim, Jewish, Christian—holidays, as well as birthdays and other celebrations. I also spent time with people informally: inviting them to my

apartment, going to the *muncha* or *banya*—bathhouse—with them, visiting the Tatar cemetery, going swimming in Kazan's Olympic-sized swimming pool, skiing in Gorky Park, going to the theatre, and promenading on frosty evenings. I made frequent trips to the city's main clothing bazaar, where a Tatar friend of mine worked, and got to know merchants of different nationalities, including itinerant workers from Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan. During time spent in Tatar theatres, I became acquainted with several actors and administrators and acquired familiarity with Tatar theatre's repertoire. I spent a month with a group of Aikido practitioners, who had little interest in political questions, and several months interacting with members of a club of university-aged Tatars almost exclusively interested in nation-building. I went dancing at the chaste Tatar discothèque in the former Lenin Monument and at Kazan's sole gay club, where sex is on public display.

My ethnographic data came from interactions with people of different ethnic, social, and educational backgrounds. My consultants ranged from village-born Tatar-speakers, who communicated in Russian with difficulty, to urban-born Russian monolinguals, who knew only a few key Tatar words, and included people with varying ranges of ability in the two languages. Middle-aged, village-born, Tatar intellectual women, who took me under their wing, often provided me initial entrée into various networks. But, I also became acquainted with their younger and older relatives and friends, some of whom identified more with the city than the countryside—many of whom were not Tatar or had little formal education.

Doing fieldwork changed the way I conceived of the research project because certain assumptions I made when beginning my research turned out not to be true. My initial proposal concerned the transmission and interpretation of national ideologies as they filtered down through government hierarchies to the children considered to be their ultimate recipients. Thus, I planned to examine how intellectuals' national ideologies were interpreted into textbooks; how teachers interpreted those textbooks in the classroom; how those teachers conveyed their interpretations of national ideologies to children; and how the children interpreted them. I planned to spend most of my time in classrooms to collect data on how these ideologies were or were not accepted and how they changed during diffusion. But, I found these were not the most compelling set of questions to emerge from doing ethnographic research in Tatarstan.

Rather, a more interesting set of questions, in my opinion, concerned the ways in which Tatar national ideologies do not fit the model proposed

by Anderson and other scholars who put forward similar theories about the relationships between language and nationalism. Works on nationalism often suggest that people experiencing national feeling imagine themselves as a homogenous, unified, bounded national unit, dangerously exclusionary of outsiders beneath a public veneer of respectability, and ready to disavow historical facts that might imply that they once felt less national than they do at present. However, Tatars supportive of sovereignty did not conform to this model of nationalism in four specific ways.

First, I found that Tatars didn't tend to expound a single, unifying, purist, national ideology. This is most clearly manifested by the materials on the song genre *mong* in Chapter 7. When I asked people about the vast individual variation in Tatar understandings of *mong*, they said that they didn't expect Tatars to all think uniformly. Even in terms of religious faith, so central to how Tatars present themselves as different from both Russians and their Soviet-period selves, everyone I spoke to gave varying interpretations of what faith meant and what role it should play in their lives. The one exception to this—the only person I encountered who was exclusionary and purist in the ideology she expounded—was Fäüzia Bäyrämovä, leader of the nationalist Ittifaq Party. However, Bäyrämovä has been effectively exiled from mainstream Tatar society both discursively, as well as physically, since she no longer resides in Kazan, but rather in the post-industrial city of Yar Chally, about 140 miles away from Tatarstan's capital.

Second, literature in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology often gives the impression that there are average speakers of a language. Yet, I found it impossible to locate "average" Tatar-speakers in Kazan. Rather, it turned out that everyone was positioned in multiple ways both linguistically and with regards to their social networks.⁸¹ Third, I discovered that the boundaries between "Tatar culture" and "other cultures" were permeable and shifting. This was true not only in terms of trying to parse shared traditions, histories and practices, but also with regards to how people produced boundaries. Sometimes, Tatar-speakers would gloss other non-Russians—Orthodox Christian but Turkic-speaking Chuvash, Käräshen Tatars (also Orthodox, not Muslim), and russophone Jews—as Russian. At others, they would underline the differences between these groups and "Russians."⁸²

Fourth, I expected that Tatar nation-builders would be inclined to deny that they had played an active role in Soviet institutions, especially membership in the Communist Party.⁸³ However, I found that not only people not particularly supportive of sovereignty, but also Tatar nation-builders,

accepted the Soviet past and saw their current efforts as emerging from the social and political structures of that period. Only one person I met attempted to modify his personal history to make his current role appear “authentic”—Niyaz Xalit, Director of the Kazan Kremlin as a Museum, who appears in Chapter 5.

In sum, these disjunctures between theory and people’s actual lives influenced the ways I came to conceptualize the processes of national reconfiguration occurring in post-Tatarstan. As a whole, they demonstrate that the near-axiomatic acceptance of Anderson’s notion of how imagined communities do the work of nationalism is mistaken. Accepting Anderson’s theory bleeds dry the variation that exists in the agency of the people whose lives we study and discounts their ability to think reflexively about how they are positioned culturally, socially, and historically.

Taking a Stand

As a token of respect to the individuals who made possible the research needed to write this book by opening up their lives to me, I attempt to draw attention to a group of people who have been rendered practically invisible in external imaginings about who lives in the former Soviet Union. I expect that one of the primary criticisms of my work will be that I seem to unquestioningly accept the existence of peoples, nations, the reified cultures ascribed to those nations—and to reproduce the falsehood that they exist. My goal, however, is to represent Tatar-speakers’ perceptions of their own practices and ideologies, as I understand them, and to demonstrate how nationness is a real lived experience for them.⁸⁴ Moreover, if I seem to depict the actions of some Russians in an unflattering light, I only describe what people who identify as “Tatar”—an ethnic and religious minority—live with every day.⁸⁵ If my writing appears to idealize Tatars, it is not intentional. They suffer from the same shortcomings and faults all people do and I don’t wish to deny them their humanity. My purpose is to demonstrate how the things Tatar-speakers consider culturally Tatar inform their everyday practices and how they view the world differently from people who do not have access to Tatar language. This has significance for the future of the region as a whole. Some scholarly work on non-Russian ex-Soviets has promoted pathologized representations of them.⁸⁶ This sometimes involves a triadic relationship whereby Russians are seen as exotically backwards and despotically Eastern—or Oriental—by comparison to Europeans or Americans, but normalized and

“European” when compared to Soviet Muslims, who take on the characteristics of the “Other” at such moments.⁸⁷

Chapter Organization

This book is organized into eight chapters, each addressing the question of how the discursive worlds inhabited by Tatar-speakers differ from those of monolingual Russian-speakers. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the historical conditions that contributed to how bilingual Tatar-speakers viewed the world prior to Gorbachev’s reforms in the mid-1980s. This chapter demonstrates that in the 1960s and 1970s even fully integrated Tatar bilingual intellectuals experienced life differently from monolingual Russians. Chapter 2 compares letters to the editor published in Tatarstan’s Russian- and Tatar-language Communist Party newspapers during the years marking the USSR’s collapse. The letters in Russian all presume the same terms of debate, no matter what the authors’ nationalities are, while the Tatar-language letters depict a world irreconcilably different from the one apparent in the letters published in the Russian language. These letters document the divergence of Tatarstan’s discursive worlds in publicly circulating texts. Chapter 3 offers a fresh approach to work on the development of Soviet nationalities by describing how orthography reflects competing, even volatile, politics. It follows the Tatar alphabet’s orthographic acrobatics since the 1920s—from Arabic to Latin to Cyrillic and back to Latin scripts—with each transformation representing a change in ideas about what the Tatar nation ought to be. Chapter 4 explores Tatar nation-builders’ ideas regarding how to develop a Tatarstan nation in the absence of a state. It describes the language-embedded Tatar cultural beliefs that influence those ideologies, stressing the postcolonial hegemony of increasingly intrusive post-Soviet Russian rule. Chapter 5 explains how repossessing Kazan as a culturally and linguistically Tatar city was fundamental to attempts to create a Tatarstan nation. Because one result of Sovieticization was to exclude non-Russian linguistic and cultural elements from Kazan’s past and present, Tatar nation-builders attempted to strengthen Tatarstan nationhood by introducing Tatar language and cultural objects into Kazan’s urban space. The authority behind this effort was fragile, undermined, in part, by having to find positive ways to include Russians in Kazan’s past. Chapter 6 describes how Soviet categories of nationality overlap with ideologies of essentialized, or racialized, difference, disclosing that Tatarstan people live with two sets of competing

racial ideologies—one based on phenotype and another emerging from a person’s emotional constitution, or “inner world.” Tatarstan provides a uniquely insightful example of how racial categories are socially constructed, particularly since Tatars themselves acknowledge awareness of the processes through which essentialized difference emerges. Chapter 7 explores discourses surrounding what Tatar-speaking Tatars consider another indicator of essential difference, the melancholy song genre *mong*. *Mong* demonstrates how nationalism taps into and emerges from an emotional state that exemplifies victimhood, while reflecting the flexibility of Tatar nationalist feelings. By way of conclusion, Chapter 8 describes the extent to which Kazan’s publics have become multiple since the Soviet Union’s collapse. The most powerful illustration of this multiplication lies in the mutually irreconcilable opinions that Kazan schoolchildren express about Chechnya. Beyond this, as the Russian government has clamped down on Tatar political activity, many once-secular nation-builders have discarded their interest in language revival to enshroud themselves in Islam. At the same time, more diverse ways to be “Tatar” have emerged as a new generation of urban, hip Tatar-speakers has come of age. Though Tatarstan sovereignty no longer exists as a political mass movement, its social effects nonetheless prevail.

Notes

- 1 Austin (1961) describes the power of words to make things happen through what he calls the perlocutionary force of performative speech acts.
- 2 Turkic languages are also spoken by neighboring Bashkirs and Chuvash, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Tuvans, many other peoples in Eurasia, and of course Turks living in Turkey. Culture—which I believe exists—consists foremost in pervasive feelings about how relations among people and relations between people and their environment ought to be and serves as a persuasive mechanism for orienting people in the world. (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990; Geertz 1973). Furthermore, cultural values are primarily conveyed through language with the result that translations of many specific experiences from one language to another are power-laden in ways that render them incomplete (Silverstein 1998; Jaffe 1999; Niranjana 1994).
- 3 Bhabha (1990).
- 4 Fanon (2004) also notes that decolonization modifies men fundamentally. Bakhtin (1991: 293).
- 5 Columbia University economist and former Russian government advisor Jeffrey Sachs was a leading advocate of applying neoliberalist “shock therapy” to the Russian economy. See Humphrey (1998, 2002) and Verdery (1996) for contrary views of neoliberalism.
- 6 Handler (1988).

- 7 Accounts of post-Soviet nationalisms often deride nation-builders' intentions, citing the fact that many of them are former Communists and therefore, it is implied, opportunists and inauthentic democrats. My interviews demonstrate that former Soviets may accuse their peers of opportunism. See Beissinger (1996) and Laušević (1996) for similar accusations. My analysis, while recognizing that people's intentionality does not remain fixed across situations and therefore cannot be frozen into tidy taxonomies, nonetheless attempts to provide a different perspective as to why Tatars may now think increasingly in national terms since the 1980s.
- 8 Iskhakov (1998); Khakim (1998); Khakimov (1996); and Walker (1996).
- 9 O'Conner (2006: 282).
- 10 Language plays a key role in how people perceive the world they inhabit. We know this from the work of Benjamin Whorf in the early 20th century. This is commonly referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. See Gal (1989, 1992, 2002a, 2002b, 2006); Gal and Irvine (1995); Gal and Woolard (2001); Irvine (1989, 1993); Irvine and Gal (1994, 2000); Jaffe (1993, 1996, 1999a, 1999b); Kroskrity (2000); Kulick (1992); Morgan (2002), Lemon (1991, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2002a, 2002b); Lucy (1992a, 1992b); Philips (1982); McElhinny (1998); Silverstein (1992, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2000); Wertheim (2003, 2006); Woolard (1985, 1989, 1998a, 1998b), among others.
- 11 Anderson (1991) and Habermas (1989).
- 12 Anderson's work doesn't account for the various sources from which people acquire information in a given language, i.e., parents and family, schooling, religious milieux, work, friends, and so on. And it doesn't account for bilingualism within a nation—which likewise existed in 19th century Europe (whether Haut Deutsch and vernacular Germans or the multiple varieties of French that were spoken before the speech of people from *Ile de la Cité* became the standard).
- 13 Calhoun (1997); Gal and Woolard (2001); Silverstein (2000).
- 14 Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990).
- 15 Duranti (1997); Hanks (1990); Jakobson (1970).
- 16 Boas (1938); Sapir (1985[1949]); Whorf (1941). Lucy (1992a, 1992b) has continued this vein of research.
- 17 Silverstein (2000: 125).
- 18 My text signals moments of divergence using “referential,” “worldview,” and “discursive” to denote the meaningful signs—indexes, icons, metaphors, metonyms—that began to circulate more freely among Tatar-speakers in the post-Soviet period.
- 19 Chatterjee (1991), Kelly and Kaplan (2001); Silverstein (2000).
- 20 Anderson (1991: 6 and 7, respectively). Similarly Gellner's (1983) and Hobsbawm's (1990) theories of nationalism exclude the possibility that nation-builders may not advocate congruency between the national and the political.
- 21 As pointed out by Barth (1969).
- 22 See Silverstein (2000) for an exegesis of this point.
- 23 Grojean (1982).
- 24 The ethnonym “Tatar” first appears in 8th-century Chinese sources (Schamiloglu, personal communication). In the Russian Empire, however, it appears to have been applied to Turkic-speaking Muslims not engaged in transhumance, but rather agriculture or trade, and therefore includes people living in the region of Kazan, as well as in Crimea, Siberia, and sometimes Azerbaijan. Providing evidence that the ideology about

- what makes for civilization is shared, some Russians deny the validity of the methods Tatar archaeologists used to date the coins.
- 25 Pelenski (1974).
 - 26 An Orthodox Christian, Turkic-speaking group called Chuvashes, whose contemporary language appears to more closely resemble the Turkic dialect (there are inscriptions in Arabic as well) on Bolgar grave markers, likewise claim descent from Bolgars. See Shnirel'man (1996) for a somewhat contentious discussion of Bolgar's legacy.
 - 27 Shnirel'man (1996). Previous to this, Turkic dialects were represented by runes. Grave headstones from the period previous to the Great Horde's descent upon Bolgar in 1238 bear inscriptions in Arabic.
 - 28 Werth (2002).
 - 29 There were Nestorian Christians among highly placed Chingisid bureaucrats and the Russian Orthodox Church was exempted from paying taxes.
 - 30 Pelenski (1974).
 - 31 See also Grey (1964). Ostrowski (2002) explains that it was only after Ivan tried to co-opt Tatar leaders and install his own candidate on Kazan's throne that he attacked.
 - 32 According to Prince Kurbsky's account in Karamzin (1892). See also Kappeler (2001).
 - 33 Kappeler (2001).
 - 34 Karamzin (1892). See Halperin (1985), Kappeler (2001), Karamzin (1892), and Pelenski (1974) for a more comprehensive account of the conquest of Kazan.
 - 35 Pelenski (1974). Batunsky (2003) disagrees with this claim, advocating instead a belief that Islam is inherently inimical to Russians.
 - 36 See Karamzin (1892).
 - 37 Soviet social evolution was strongly influenced by 19th-century American ethnologist Lewis Henry Morgan. According to Morgan (1995[1877], 1996[1851]), peoples or nations are all supposed to start as savages and then advance through barbarism to civilization. Aryans were civilized. Morgan posited that cognitive development powered the development of political institutions. Engels (1993[1884]) borrowed from Morgan though for him and Marx the engine powering evolution was changes in the means of production. See Engels (1977[1849]).
 - 38 See Hirsch (1997) for a description of this process. Languages came to stand for nations to the extent that, for example, Tatar-speakers sometimes speak of language death as the genocide of a nation.
 - 39 Wolpoff and Caspari (1997). Aisylu, who appears elsewhere in the text, pointed out to me that when there were inter-national festivals—cultural exchanges between Soviet peoples—delegations of other Turks (she mentioned Kazakhs) were never sent to Tatarstan because the Soviet authorities wanted to maintain the myth that Soviet Turks possessed different cultures.
 - 40 See Austin (1991).
 - 41 Gellner (1983) asserts that statehood is central to nationness.
 - 42 Hirsch (1997).
 - 43 Work by linguistic anthropologists on the relationships between language and nationalism illustrates how linguistic differences can index cultural ones, which may be variously defined as national, regional, or otherwise indicative of groupness (Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity (1998); Silverstein (1996a, 1998). Language ideologies, as they are called, concern the ways in which perceptions about languages—their level of sophistication, their ability to express certain kinds of ideas or, by contrast, relative limit-

edness vis-à-vis other languages—are not in fact about the languages themselves, but rather concern power relations between speakers of dominant and subordinate languages or dialects (Kulick 1992). Language ideologies constitute both the conscious and unconscious systems of ideas people hold about the relationships between linguistic features and groups of people (Gal 1992). Moreover, linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists point out that language ideologies not only influence the speakers who are the subject of study, but likewise influence analysts' perceptions (Irvine and Gal 2000; Milroy 2001; Silverstein 1998). As Irvine and Gal put it, "[T]here is no view from nowhere" (2000: 36). That is, everyone inhabits at least one discursive world. In their seminal work together, Gal and Irvine identify three semiotic processes through which language ideologies construct difference and similarity (Gal and Irvine 1995, Irvine 1995, & Irvine and Gal 1996, 2000). They name these processes iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure. Iconization entails a shift in the sign relationship so that linguistic features which once only indexed social groups or activities come to iconically represent them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's enduring essence. Fractal recursivity involves projecting an opposition that exists at one level of a relationship between language and social organization onto another level of relationship. Erasure refers to a simplification of the sociolinguistic field which renders some people or phenomena invisible. Influenced by Herder (1993), Soviet language ideologies equated the discovery of a language with that of a nation. According to this ideology, a nation's language expresses its culture and its essence (Philips 1992). See also Bauman and Briggs (2000) for other contexts in which this ideology holds true.

44 Brubaker (1996: 23).

45 This occurred to Kazan Tatars, a third of whom ended up living in neighboring Bashkortostan (Schafer 1995), as well as in more famous examples like Nagorno-Karabakh.

46 When these decisions were being made in the 1920s, by contrast, one explicit reason provided for dividing up the area where Tatars lived into Bashkiria (the neighboring republic to the east) and Tataria was to give Bashkirs, who have always been numerically few, a chance to develop as a nationality (Schafer 1995). Indeed, despite the reported practice of converting Tatars into Bashkirs, after World War II, Tatars still outnumbered Bashkirs in late Soviet Bashkortostan. Official figures from the 1989 Soviet census put the percentage of Tatars living in Bashkortostan at 28.4%, while stating that Bashkirs comprise 21.9% and Russians 39.3% of Bashkortostan's population (cited from Graney 1999). Tatars I spoke to at *Kyzyl Tang*, Bashkortostan's official Tatar newspaper, on 6 July 2000 provided the following figures: 48% Russian, 35% Tatar, and 16% Bashkir. The 2002 All Russia Census reports that Bashkortostan's population has significantly shifted: Russians are 36.3%, Bashkirs 29.8%, and Tatars 24.1% (Zorin 2004). None of these statistics are reliable.

47 Fändäs Safiullin, Russian Duma Deputy, Interview, June 1998.

48 Grant (1995).

49 Brubaker (1996); Lemon (2000); Slezkine (1994b); Suny (1997); and Verdery (1996).

50 Brubaker (1996). This is frequently referred to as the *piataia grafika* [the fifth entry] because of the line where nationality was indicated in domestic passports.

51 Slezkine (1994b) coined the term "ethnic particularism," which informs my use of "national particularism" here. On *ethnos* see Bromley and Kozlov (1989) and Masanov (2003).

- 52 Neglect to the Soviet Union's provincial infrastructure included a concerted lack of upkeep of buildings and roads and scant provision of basic services—running water, especially hot water, indoor heating, and telephone.
- 53 Williams (1977) on structures of feeling and Martin (2001) and Verdery (1996) on the effects of Soviet nationalities policies.
- 54 This may be due to a greater scarcity of resources distributed through ethnicized social networks, as in Verdery (1996).
- 55 Tatars and Volga Germans were never satisfied to learn that I was American. Rather, they wanted to know what my ancestors were because, the Tatars asserted, "We know there are Tatars in America" while the Germans asked, "What is your father?"
- 56 Damir Isxakov cited in an RFE/RL Report, 17 December 2001.
- 57 Zorin (2004).
- 58 Much of this repatriation consists of Tatars (and others) whose families left for Central Asia to avoid the authority of Soviet rule in the 1920s–1930s and now find themselves unwelcome in post-Soviet "nationalizing" Central Asian states.
- 59 Walker (2003).
- 60 In 1998, 80% of Tatarstan's financial capital still came from Moscow.
- 61 The percentage of locally collected revenues that go directly to the center is disputed, but may be up to 70% (Graney 2009).
- 62 Tatarstan's modified constitution states, "The sovereignty of the Republic of Tatarstan shall consist in full possession of the State authority (legislative, executive and judicial) beyond the competence of the Russian Federation (Article 1, Tatarstan Constitution, www.tatar.ru).” The 2002 Constitution is a thin pamphlet, by comparison to the original, tome-like document adopted in 1992.
- 63 Graney (2009).
- 64 Faller (2000, 2006).
- 65 Raviot (1992).
- 66 Censuses are unreliable, both as sources of information on nationality percentages and self-reported linguistic knowledge. A russophone Tatar friend confessed to me she reported herself and her daughter as Russian in 2002 because she didn't want to be identified with what she perceives as the backwardness of Tatarstan President Mintimir Shaimiev. One way in which language ideologies play out in Tatarstan is that not all Russians consider themselves fluent in Russian language, while many who claim to know Tatar can only produce a few ill-formed phrases in the language.
- 67 Wertheim (2003). By 2000, according to a Tatarstan government official, 45% of Tatar children living in Tatarstan cities knew Tatar fluently. Statement by K.M. Minnullin, "Tatar Schools in Tatarstan and Beyond" Conference, 24 February 2000.
- 68 Zorin et al. (2004); Damir Isxakov, personal communication (2001); and Raviot (1992), respectively. Indeed, during my fieldwork period, I only met one self-identified Russian who was actively bilingual in Tatar and she was living in a village several hundred kilometers east of Kazan. According to the 2002 All Russian Census, only 99% of self-identified Russians in Russia can respond affirmatively to the question, "*Vy vladeete li russkim iazykom?*" [Are you fluent in the Russian language?] Even people who answered "no" had to fill the survey out in Russian.
- 69 Gal and Woolard (2001) on the messiness of categories.
- 70 Like mutual intelligibility (Hymes 1967), whether or not a person is bilingual is not objectively knowable.

- 71 See Humphrey (1998, 2002) on post-Soviet Russia.
- 72 Brown and Gilman (1960).
- 73 Elsewhere includes Flynn (2000), Hussain and Miller (2006), and Kvistad (1999), among others. This division follows a similar one made by Brubaker (1998) and Hobsbawm (1990).
- 74 For more on the changing definitions of “sovereignty” during the dissolution of the Soviet Union, see Walker (2003).
- 75 In fact, both Stalin and Lenin thought that a nation had the right to enter into federal relations with other nations, to complete secession, and to sovereignty (Slezkine 1994a: 416).
- 76 The city of Yar Chally is called Naberezhnye Chelny in Russian.
- 77 I spent more time with the Tatar classes at the Lab School than with the Russian ones, although I spent time with both types of classes at school functions and in the hallways.
- 78 Gabdullah Tukay is the most revered Tatar national poet, who died in 1913.
- 79 The experiments to elicit racial ideologies were developed in consultation with Larry Hirschfeld. See Hirschfeld (1996, 1997) for a complete description of those methods.
- 80 My design was based on similar work performed by Bilaniuk (2005), Laitin (1995, 1998), and Woolard (1989).
- 81 Wei (2000) and Wei et al. (2002) present a sophisticated exposition of these analytical conundra.
- 82 Providing just one example of this a Tatar-speaking teenager once told me her mother objected to her boyfriend because he was Russian, while on another occasion, she reported that he was Chuvash.
- 83 This expectation was influenced by Shnirel'man's (1996) description of Tatars' attitudes towards medieval history.
- 84 My effort is influenced by work on Russia by Lemon (1996); Paxson (2006); and Yurchak (1997, 2005), among others.
- 85 Any unflattering depictions of “Russians” are not more targeted at Russians than descriptions of the desperation with which Soviet people lived in Sheila Fitzpatrick's *Everyday Stalinism* or the inefficacy of policies that affect Central Asian women's lives in Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes' *Lost Voices*.
- 86 See in particular Poliakov (1992).
- 87 Said's *Orientalism* (1979) is the seminal work on how caricatures of “Orientals” have invaded western scholarship.

CHAPTER 1

HOW TATAR NATION-BUILDERS CAME TO BE

“We had internal censorship. We spoke like communists, but we thought otherwise.”

Tatar nation-builder, 21 October 1999

In 1930 at the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR, General Secretary Joseph Stalin pronounced into existence the policy of *sliyanie*—which he called a necessary and natural coalescence of the people of the Soviet Union into a single culture. *Sliyanie* gave the authorities license to exert growing, often covert, pressures towards the linguistic and ethnic russification of non-Russians, which only subsided somewhat after Gorbachev implemented his failed policy of perestroika in 1986.¹

In 1938—the year of the Great Purge—russification pressures increased. The Soviet government declared Russian the language for use in communications between the USSR’s various nationalities. Simultaneously Russian was introduced as an obligatory subject in all Soviet schools.² From that point on, Russian officially became the Soviet Union’s dominant language, the language to be used in all public interactions. These interactions could be of a largely voluntary nature: checking a book out of the library; mailing a letter; sending a telegram—first translated into Russian—to relatives living in another part of the country; or subscribing to a newspaper published in any Soviet language. Or they could be more obligatory encounters: taking oral exams in order to enter university; buying a train ticket to travel on state-sponsored business; or performing the military service required of all able-bodied young men. In other words, despite the state’s concerted development of national cultures, full participation in Soviet society required fluency in Russian language. Hence, in most spheres of Soviet social activity and cultural exploration, participating minorities had to speak Russian and abide by the Russian cultural values of the people who definitively controlled those spheres. Soviet activities thus often slipped normatively into a cultural world defined by Russian values and Soviet people frequently equated “Soviet” with “Russian.”

This chapter describes Soviet language planning and national education with a focus on effects on Tatar language. Learning about Soviet language planning is the first step in comprehending why Tatar-speakers would want to engage in mass protest and in understanding how Tatarstan's discursive worlds diverged and multiplied with such radical speed towards the end of the 20th century.

The need to learn Russian in order to become fully integrated into Soviet society suggests that individual speakers of minority languages had to decide at some point in their lives whether to embrace Russian dominance or not. Certainly, the decision would not have been absolute, since anyone who participates in a social order accepts certain aspects of it while rejecting others. Nonetheless, some non-Russians embraced Russian language more than others, as in the case of village-born Tatars who “forgot” how to speak Tatar once they moved to Kazan to begin their adult lives. Other migrants insisted on speaking Tatar in public, sometimes as loudly as they could, even when that meant enduring harassment from offended Russians.

Members of national minorities who spoke a language other than Russian publicly or otherwise adhered to non-hegemonic cultural norms during the Soviet period suffered for it, punished for stretching the boundaries of national behavior beyond what the authorities deemed politically appropriate. They endured marginalization from mainstream Soviet society and provincialization with respect to it. Even Tatar-speakers who appeared to be fully integrated into Soviet society were nonetheless differently positioned from monolingual Russian-speakers. Thus, while the discursive worlds of Tatarstan people have been diverging at a precipitous rate since the mid-1980s, the existence of these discursive worlds as distinctly different entities is not novel. Moreover, while Tatar nation-builders occupied discursive worlds dissimilar to those occupied by Russian-speakers, they nevertheless do not represent a resistant subaltern, but rather participated as fully in building socialist society as their Russian compatriots.

Kazan's Ethnic History

At the time of its conquest in 1552, Kazan became by definition a Russian-speaking city. From the Middle Ages until the 1917 October Revolution, Tatar-speakers were largely confined to the Old and New Tatar Quarters, peripheral, swampy, low-lying districts beyond the city's origi-

nal boundary on the other side of Lake Bulak where the city's markets bustled, while Kazan's government buildings, university, museums, synagogues and churches—Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran—were erected uphill out of range of the Volga River's annual flooding. Tatars established their own cemetery deep in the New Tatar Quarter—now literally on the other side of the railroad tracks—but they couldn't keep Russians from desecrating their ancestors' graves.³

Although the Tatar Quarter's first inhabitants seem all to have been christened at Ivan the Terrible's command, their neighborhood was dotted with mosques, which supported confessional schools—*mäkteb* and *mädräse*. These schools were closely monitored by Russian inspectors, who required the mullahs teaching in them to speak Russian for the purpose of facilitating interrogations, but tried to keep students from acquiring other skills useful in the world that lay beyond the Tatar Quarter.⁴ Russian government administrators wanted Tatars to stay ignorant for much the same reasons that American slaves were forbidden from learning to read.⁵ They were afraid that knowledge could lead to rebellion.

Medieval Kazan—An Ethnographic Snapshot

Before Ivan the Terrible's conquest in 1552, Kazan was the capital of a daughter state of the Golden Horde twice the size of present-day Tatarstan.⁶ The Kazan Khanate's rulers were settled Turkic-speaking Muslims, who governed an important international trading center and sporadically received tribute from the Principality of Muscovy.⁷ The diplomatic language was a predecessor of modern Tatar and the dominant religion Islam. Kazan developed dynamically under Golden Horde rule, and by the mid-15th century, according to a pair of Venetian travelers to the region, had become "a trade city from which an enormous amount of furs are transported to Moscow, Poland, Persia, and Finland," "walled like Como, and with bazaars."⁸ Coins discovered there in recent excavations originate variously in Western Europe, China, and Central Asia. Newly unearthed camel bones suggest that merchant caravans, like those that made their way along the famous Silk Road, traveled through the city.⁹

From the time of the collapse of the Golden Horde state until conquest, approximately 1438–1552, Russian merchants sailing on the Volga River paid Kazan for the privilege, and Moscow alternately paid tribute to Kazan and neighboring city-state Astrakhan.¹⁰ Kazan's architecture in this period was a combination of native traditions from the earlier Bolgar pe-

riod and adaptations from Turkish and Italian masters. The archaeological evidence indicates diversity in the people living there—in addition to artifacts belonging to Kazan's Muslims, Russian crosses and pottery shards typical of 14th–15th century Russian and Finnic manufacture have been unearthed in Kazan's Kremlin.¹¹

A 41-day blood bath, Kazan's conquest was the most decisive in a string of ongoing wars between the Principality of Muscovy and the Kazan Khanate. Once Ivan's troops—said to be 150,000 strong—overwhelmed the religious leader Sayid Kol Shārif with his battalion of mullahs and penetrated the citadel, where 30,000 soldiers had barricaded themselves, the latter tried to flee by scaling the Kremlin's walls. According to a Russian eyewitness, at the end of the fighting so many corpses covered the ground that it was hard to take a step without tripping over one. The “pagan dead” were piled as high as the top of the Kremlin and their bodies lay strewn outside the citadel down the hill it sits upon all the way to the River Kazanka, across the wide river—which ran red with blood—and on its opposite shore.¹² The surrounding forest, where many had sought refuge, was teeming with injured and dead Kazanians.¹³ The city was burnt to a crisp. Kazan's entire male population was destroyed and women and children were killed as well. At the end of the day on October 4, 1552, the stench from the corpses was apparently so overpowering, despite the nippy autumn air, that, after inspecting the khan's palace for half an hour, Ivan IV hurried away to his camp outside the city.¹⁴ To this day, a charred layer containing the unconsecrated bones of Kazanians who sought shelter from the Russian onslaught is said to exist deep in the soil of the Kazan Kremlin. While Kazan's conquest marks Russia's beginning as an imperial power, for many Tatars, it designates the beginning of colonial rule.

In commemoration of his victory Ivan the Terrible erected the Annunciation Cathedral in Kazan and St. Basil's Cathedral on Moscow's Red Square. After having them christened, he incorporated the three dynasties of Kazan's rulers into his service. Söyembike, Kazan's last Muslim ruler—the widow of Khan Safa Girei—was forcibly married off to a prince in Ivan's service, Shah-Ali, who reportedly beat her and cut off her nose and perhaps even killed her. Ivan was troubled by these rumors, as they spoiled his diplomatic relations with Söyembike's relatives.¹⁵

Ivan declared that Kazan's Kremlin be rebuilt in stone to prevent other attackers from using Chinese dynamite to destroy it, as he had done. Indeed, Russia invested so heavily in rebuilding Kazan that within 15 years of its absolute destruction, the city had already surpassed its previous size, though

its composition was completely different. Only ethnic Russians—government administrators, nobility, artisans, and soldiers—lived within the city limits. About 5,000 Tatars lived beyond the city walls in the Tatar Quarter, a swampy lowland full of “marshy gases and unnavigable filth,” flooded by the Volga each spring.¹⁶ The area, which still bears that name and still contains a majority Tatar population, is prone to flooding to this day.

Russian officials, who forbade Tatars from entering Kazan upon pain of death, directly administered the Tatar Quarter.¹⁷ These Tatars, however, were the privileged few, either members of the tsar’s service class or their servants. The majority of Tatars were exiled 20–25 miles from Kazan and at least 10 miles away from major waterways. Since Kazan was an important merchant town, depriving Muslims of access to the rivers and ports dispossessed them of their primary means of earning a living. Once Russian peasants began to move into the region, Muslims were forced off their rural lands into locations without water.¹⁸

Although the Tatar Quarter’s inhabitants lived on the edge of the city, they mostly engaged in non-urban occupations. As Sultanov, a contemporary Tatar geographer, writes, “From the appearance of the first grasses in the spring to the first snow in the fall, a large portion left to graze and work the land in the villages.”¹⁹ A century after conquest, some Tatars managed to resume the occupation that had previously brought them great wealth. In the first half of the 17th century, Christianized Tatars who had entered into the tsar’s service were given permission to begin trading again.²⁰

Russia’s conquest didn’t mark the end of adversarial relations between Russians and Tatars, the primary source of which were Russia’s ongoing efforts to convert Tatars from Islam to Orthodox Christianity.²¹ In the 1590s, four mosques with tall minarets mysteriously appeared in the Tatar Quarter. Kazan’s religious authorities wrote to Tsar Fyodor Ivanovich to complain of this and lament that the new Christians weren’t going to church, wearing crosses, or keeping icons in their homes. The tsar ordered the mosques destroyed and an intensification in missionary activity. He recommended punishing Muslims by putting them in chains, beating them, and locking them up in jail. Despite the tsar’s orders, Tatars continued to build mosques, either illegally or with the tacit agreement of the local government.²²

An account by Oruj Bek, a Persian who later converted to Christianity, from 1599 provides further illustration of discord in the region. He states that the people of Kazan—by whom he meant the Christian population—are often drunk. For this reason, there was an ordinance forbidding Rus-

sian officers from carrying weapons—"otherwise they would be killing each other every other moment." Moreover, he explains,

...in each house is a dog, as big as a lion, for they fear robbery by night from him who might be an enemy. In the daytime the dogs are chained up, but at the first hour of the evening the bells ring to warn people that the dogs are about to be let loose in the streets, and thus the passengers abroad must take care. For they set their dogs free, and no one then dare go out of his house, lest he should be torn to pieces by them.

Not only did dogs roam the streets, but at night the Kazan Kremlin was garrisoned by soldiers "because it was the custom formerly of the Turks and Tartars to come in by night and, having set fire to the houses, plunder the people."²³

A century later, Kazan's Tatar population received acknowledgement of its religious rights for the first time when, in 1694, Peter the Great decided in favor of a group of Tatars who complained to him that Russians had begun erecting houses in their cemetery. The houses went up despite the tsar's decision, and the climate of tolerance quickly dissipated. In the mid-18th century Peter's daughter, Tsarina Elizabeth, issued an edict ordering all mosques destroyed—400 of them were razed to the ground.

Some Tatars today consider Catherine the Great's decree in mid-18th century permitting Muslims to erect stone mosques the first sign of respect accorded Tatars by a Russian ruler. Catherine likewise reversed the earlier policy promoting religious conversion in an effort to prevent alienating Tatar nobles from Russian society.²⁴ Notwithstanding Catherine's Enlightenment-inspired approach, while she was in power Tatars actively participated in two violent uprisings—the Revolt of 1755 and Pugachev's rebellion in 1774.²⁵

The Emergence of a Modern Tatar Nation

Beginning in the mid-19th century, as part of a wave of reform movements sweeping the Muslim world, some Kazan Tatars—most notably, Shibhaddin Märjani (1818–1889) and Kayum Nasyiri (1825–1902)—began to advocate for modernization among Eurasian Muslims.²⁶ This modernization movement, called *jadidism* after the Arabic word for "new" [*jadid*], lasted through the 1920s. At its core was a concern still central for Tatars today—education. Jadidism's most famous advocate was the Crimean Tatar Ismail Bey Gasprinskii (1854–1914), best known for beginning publication of a pan-Turkic newspaper called *Terjuman* (1883),

which helped to create connections between Turkic-speakers in various parts of the Russian Empire, and for creating a phonetic method for teaching the arabic alphabet which he used in Russia's first New Method school (1884). Although jadidism had become a radicalized political movement by the time of the 1917 revolution, its original thrust was to incorporate knowledge of secular subjects—math, science, foreign languages—and other knowledge from the west into Muslim society with the goal of improving education for men and women.²⁷ While the Muslim clergy were largely opposed to jadidism, its adherents did not reject Islam, but rather saw reform as a vehicle for religious renewal.

In 1854 Kazan's city administration was unified and Tatars legally had the right to live anywhere in the city. Shortly thereafter, non-Christians earned the right to become members of the city parliament.²⁸ Tatars had resumed mercantile activity in the 17th century and had become involved in industry and banking by the early 1900s. Even so, jadidism arose out of a context of institutionalized discrimination. Russia's 14 million Tatars were barred from holding government office—including positions in the post office and telegraph—and thus couldn't advocate for administrative changes to improve their standing within the areas of business to which they were limited.²⁹ Tatar capital was banned from enterprises involving the production of metal—including gold—oil, coal, sugar, and wine. Also forbidden were construction, shipping, railroads, and any other industries that received priority from the government.³⁰ Moreover, Tatar peasants paid higher taxes than non-Muslims, although, in the early 1900s, on average they held 30% less land than Russian peasants.³¹ While all Russia's workers lived in abominable conditions and suffered cruel exploitation in the early 20th century, Tatar workers are said to have been even worse off than others. Poor knowledge of Russian—in 1881, only one in a thousand Tatars is reported to have known the language—contributed to their inability to receive technical education.³² As a result, Tatar workers earned less than Russian workers. And, according to newspaper articles from the period, their bosses frequently beat them.³³

Before the 1917 revolution, Äminä Apakaeva—the granddaughter of a mullah—explained to me that Tatar society was organized around mosques, each with its own mullah, who acted as the spiritual leader of his *mäxällä*—the Muslim equivalent of a parish. The mullah would teach the male children living in the *mäxällä* how to read the Quran and his wife would run a school for the *mäxällä*'s girls. According to Muslim tradition, children studied the Quran written in the original Arabic, and, as a consequence, they became literate in the written versions of their vernaculars.

The schools were private, but the sums of money required to attend were modest.

Although Tatar educators repeatedly requested financial support for Muslim schools from the Russian government, they never received any.³⁴ The only non-Russian schools to receive funding were missionary schools for Christened ex-Muslims, the primary purpose of which was to teach them how to gain more converts.³⁵ The government refused to recognize certification of graduation from a *mādrāse*—Muslim secondary school—as a valid diploma. Without this recognition and lacking knowledge of Russian language, young Tatars were effectively barred from receiving higher education at Russian institutions.³⁶

It is unclear how well Muslim confessional schools taught reading. For example, in a 1901 edition of *Terjuman*, Gasprinskii describes the pathetic illiteracy he observed among *mākteb* students in the 1860s–1870s. However, in an 1881 plea to the Russian government for financial support of Russian Muslims' education, he implies that literacy among Muslims was at 50–60%, which would have been significantly higher than the rate among Russians—7% in 1855 and 21%–23% in 1897.³⁷ In 1905 Russian government officials in Kazan stated that around 80% of Tatars were literate, while in 1915 Kazan's governor wrote that almost all Tatars were literate in their own language.³⁸ However, a 1905 survey reported that the literacy rate among Tatar men was only 21.67%, and among women—17.73%. Contemporary Tatar historian Ravil Amirxanov attributes this discrepancy to inaccurate self-reporting among Tatars who were afraid that the Russian government would further interfere in their lives should it discover they could read and write.³⁹

It is clear, however, that the Russian government sought to keep Muslims uneducated. For example, in 1901 Russia's Director of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment stated that he had “no desire to reform Muslim schools in any way that might improve these learning institutes” and he considered it a blessing that “the Muslim schools conceived by Muslims themselves will as previously employ routine memorization, which has condemned Muslim scholarship to stagnation and which prevents true believers from acquiring knowledge.” Moreover, the government considered a “dangerous influence” schools that might arouse in their students a feeling of national self-worth and self-knowledge, awaken interest in practical knowledge, or their own language and culture. These latter were *jadid* schools.⁴⁰

The greatest supporters of secular education were entrepreneurs, industrialists, and merchants. As part of their Muslim obligation to give

alms, Tatar businessmen and an occasional businesswoman contributed hundreds of thousands of rubles to various projects, which included building mosques, opening *mäktebs* and *mādräses*, subsidizing educational institutions, and sending gifted students abroad to study. While the need to educate Muslims who could compete on the Russian and foreign markets was great, in 1908 it was still illegal to open jadid schools. So, jadidism was incorporated into confessional schools, which often had dual programs—one for the Russian inspectors and another for the Muslim faithful.⁴¹

Up until the 1905 revolution, Tatars' freedom of assembly was severely restricted. Secular cultural events were forbidden, and the secret police spied on funerals and weddings, which they considered political gatherings.⁴² Because non-religious gatherings were banned, they were conducted underground and consequently became politicized. This was particularly true of publishing and theatre performances, although other activities—such as presenting music concerts and running a public library—were also prohibited.

Although Kazan Tatars appealed over and over again to the authorities for permission to start periodical presses, their requests were denied until after the 1905 revolution.⁴³ In the early 1900s, Russian censors noted that publication of a newspaper in the Tatar language would aid “the unification of Tatars scattered around various parts of Russia” and asserted that “the weaker the connections between Tatars...the better.”⁴⁴ Tatars responded by beginning to publish clandestinely. In 1901 the first nationalist organization, *Sherkertlek*, which was illegal, began publication of an underground newspaper.⁴⁵ Others soon followed suite.

The Russian authorities also restricted publication of books. By a decree issued in 1800, only the Quran, prayer books, and other religious texts could be printed.⁴⁶ Despite this, in January 1900, a secret police circular documented the appearance of “dangerous” “completely new tendencies” in Tatar literature, with the potential for “giving rise to a serious fracture in the life” of Russia’s entire Muslim population. Censorship increased. Publication in translation of a collection of Russian newspaper articles and a Russian encyclopedic *History of Asia* were prohibited, along with several Russian classics. In particular, satirical works by Gogol, Tolstoy, and Pushkin were banned, as government bureaucrats considered Tatars’ interest in circulating them a “wily” pretext for mocking Russians.⁴⁷

Russia’s devastating losses in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 brought on a revolution, which gave rise to nationalist movements in several re-

gions across the Russian Empire and more tolerance on the part of the government towards minority languages. These general developments opened Tatar society up to revolutionary changes. New Method jadid schools were started for women and Russian educational institutions in Kazan and elsewhere became more accessible to Tatar boys and girls.⁴⁸ Tatars quickly took advantage of the government's newly bestowed permission to publish newspapers in their own language. In 1905–1906, 20 Tatar papers began publication. Though the first Tatar publishing house was shut down in 1908 for printing a Kazakh book considered insulting to the tsar, a second Tatar press, opened by two brothers named Karimov—whose third brother was a wealthy merchant—was extremely successful. By 1910 the Karimovs had their own building and a store on Haymarket Square, now the site of Kazan's Kamal Theater. From 1905–1917 they put out 1,294 books and a total of 14 million volumes of literature.⁴⁹ By the beginning of the 20th century, both printing and selling Tatar books—once under the control of Russian tradesmen—were increasingly in the hands of Tatars themselves.⁵⁰

As with the publication of secular books, the establishment of a vibrant theatrical tradition was central to jadidist activity.⁵¹ According to fundamentalist interpretations of the Quran, Muslims are not allowed to participate in theatre performances. However, the forward-looking, tight-knit jadid group that created Tatar theater at the turn of the 20th century rejected such interpretations. They learned about theater from attending Russian productions and then writing plays and staging illegal performances in private.⁵² Kazan's first public performance, in 1906, followed one in Ufa (now capital of neighboring Bashkortostan) the same year and drew an audience of 600 spectators. The next year, the first Tatar theater troupe *Sayar* was established by the jadidist *Shariq kluby*, which likewise officially came into existence in 1907. In addition to performing Tatar plays, *Sayar* presented Russian, German, and French works—at the time unknown to Tatar audiences. When World War I began, *Shariq kluby* was shut down when some of its members left for the front, though those who stayed behind in Kazan continued to produce plays.⁵³

In 1911 a Tatar journalist named Soloviev opened a movie theater, Cinema Bouffe, which primarily played reels about Muslims in other parts of the world, including films about political events in Eastern states, tragedies, comedies, dramas, as well as sentimental love scenes from the lives of European people. Cinema Bouffe was heavily advertised in the local press and became extremely popular among Kazan's Tatar population, by whose request Bouffe screened some films several times. It tried

to attract Tatar women to its “temple of spiritual delight” by dividing its auditorium into separate sections for men and women. Its great popularity is attributed to the fact that during intermissions a Tatar orchestra played in the auditorium. Although Cinema Bouffe’s existence was short-lived, it had a marked effect on the collective aesthetics of Kazan’s Tatars.⁵⁴

On the eve of the 1917 October Revolution, Tatars made up 22% of Kazan’s population.⁵⁵ By 1914, there were 154 Tatar merchant houses in Kazan, which, in addition to trade, included factories for leather production, soap making, and wool cleaning, and steam mills.⁵⁶ Russians—along with other Christians and some Jews—occupied the most prestigious sections of the city, while Muslims continued to live clustered around the Tatar Quarter’s noisy, dirty markets. Even successful merchants and wealthy industrialists, who maintained elegant houses and kept servants, lived there.⁵⁷

Continuing a trend that began in the 16th century, if not earlier, urban Tatars didn’t live year round at their city residences. Some traveled to Siberia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and America, and elsewhere to trade in furs and leather, while others migrated back and forth between their native villages. For example, a genealogy of the Apakaev family, whose members currently live in Tatarstan, Finland, and California, reveals that in the early 1900s half of them spent at least some portion of their lives in Harbin, China—on fur-purchasing trips—and others transported agricultural products locally from the nearby countryside to city bazaars.

Tatar Historiography

It is only a slight exaggeration to claim that, until the celebration of Kazan’s Millennium in August 2005, official sources on Tatar history were nearly as impoverished as the Tatar Quarter became under Soviet rule. Take, for example, a 1981 book called *Stranitsy iz istorii goroda Kazani* [Pages from the history of the city of Kazan], which presents urban Tatar society formulaically, its sole topics of inquiry the working class’s revolutionary struggle and women’s emancipation.⁵⁸ Although the authors who contributed to the collection provide some relevant data about pre-revolutionary Kazan, the requirements for writing history during Brezhnev’s rule obliged scholars to depict early 20th century Kazan teleologically, as a place where the next, inevitable historical event was the 1917 revolution.

Even in 1999, the history of Kazan transmitted in Russian language hardly acknowledged the presence of Tatars in the city. In that year, a Kazanian of Polish descent whom I met while visiting the city's German Karl Fuchs Society in their renovated Lutheran church, invited me on a special tour of a museum exhibition about Russian poet Alexander Pushkin's visit to Kazan in 1833. Pushkin was fascinated by Russian peasant rebel Yemelyan Pugachev and decided to follow the trail he had blazed across Russia (1773–1775). As part of this journey, Pushkin visited Kazan, where Pugachev's ragtag army had terrorized the Russian authorities for two days in 1774. During our tour, the guide called attention to the Quran owned by Pushkin on display as evidence of his respect for Islam, but neglected to say whether he had met with any local Muslims. Nor did she mention that Pugachev had received hearty support from both Tatars and Bashkirs (a neighboring Muslim, Turkic-speaking people). She did, however, describe in detail the time Pushkin spent with local Russians and the German ethnographer and medical doctor Karl Fuchs (1776–1846) and his wife, whose house still stands, if barely, in the Old Tatar Quarter. In addition to my Polish acquaintance, the people who accompanied me on the tour included several Russians and Tatars. None of them expressed any curiosity regarding Pushkin's apparent lack of interest in Russia's own Muslim population.

Written accounts of nineteenth-century Kazan generally afford greater significance to the actions of Germans, like Karl Fuchs, or Poles—Kazan's third largest ethnic group before the 1917 revolution—such as the influential linguist Baudouin de Courtenay, who taught at Kazan University for several years, than to the lives of Tatars.⁵⁹ Only through oral accounts from Tatar-speakers did I learn that Karl Fuchs was great friends with Tatar ethnographer Kayum Nasyiri and that Nasyiri provided Fuchs with entrée into Tatar homes and taught him about Tatar culture and language, which resulted in Fuchs' insightful monograph on Tatars. In return, I learned, Nasyiri earned the right to attend Kazan University under Professor Fuchs' auspices.

Twentieth-Century Social Integration

“Until World War II, signs hung outside business establishments that read ‘Tatars and Dogs Prohibited.’”

Reixana xanyim, November 1999

Though Tatar gained official status as a government language in 1921, scant archival evidence about the practical status of Tatar or other minority Soviet languages during the early twentieth century exists.⁶⁰ Historian Yuri Slezkine writes that Soviet administrators working in Siberia were expected to learn local languages, but didn’t, while Tatar linguist Mirfatyh Zakiev claims that Russians who needed knowledge of local languages for administering non-Russians in the 1920s acquired those languages.⁶¹ Renowned Soviet dissident Yevgeniia Ginzburg, who taught at Kazan University until her arrest in 1938, writes in her first volume of memoirs about the Soviet prison camp system that her interrogators chastised her for having learned how to speak Tatar, calling her a traitor.⁶² Ginzburg also notes that she used Tatar to communicate with the distraught wife of an arrested Tatar Bolshevik, who was unable to converse with the other occupants of their prison cell. Since the majority of those arrested at that time would have been zealous communists and consequently more likely to study local languages, Ginzburg’s observation suggests that Russian-speakers rarely learned them.

Despite the introduction of *sliyanie* in 1930 and the 1938 decision to make Russian the language of inter-national communication, it was the tragic experiences of World War II that transformed the USSR into a union, albeit fractured, of Soviet citizens. Until that time, evidence suggests, most minority people living outside the major cities in the Soviet periphery navigated the revolutionary changes to which they were subject much as they had endured Russia’s various imperial policies.⁶³ While in the 1920s there had been progressive revolutionaries who supported the Bolshevik government among the members of every Soviet nation, in the 1930s the Bolsheviks eradicated most of them as part of a brutal anti-nationalist campaign. At the beginning of the Second World War, however, Stalin eased his repression of non-Russian minorities in an effort to bolster their patriotism and willingness to fight Germany.

World War II changed life in the USSR in two very significant ways. First, it gave Soviets a tangible, invading common enemy against which to unite. Until then, as histories of the Great Terror demonstrate, the enemy was ephemeral, internal, ubiquitous and almost completely fabricated.⁶⁴

And, second, it caused Soviet men to be drafted into the army en masse, which effected their massive integration into Russian-speaking society.

At least, this is the story middle-aged Tatar women told after the Soviet Union no longer existed. Time and again, they would complain to me that Tatar men returned from World War II with a newly acquired taste for drink. Soviet soldiers rations include vodka, which Tatars claim, and which claim archival evidence seems to support, Tatars did not consume prior to World War II.⁶⁵ As anyone familiar with Russian culture will know, not drinking vodka when vodka is present is not a choice a man can make. Likewise, drinking vodka entails drinking until all the vodka is drunk. Thus, the complaints made by Tatar women imply, soldiers who returned from the front with a taste for vodka were pressured into drinking as part of their soldierly duty.

The culture of Russian drinking requires lots of talking. When Russians drink, they take turns pronouncing long, elaborate, sentimental toasts, and then everyone empties their glass altogether in a single gulp—a sign of machismo. In Russia drinking is obligatorily a group practice, strongly associated with male bonding. It is synonymous with friendship. An episode of the subtly brilliant detective series *Ulitsa razbitikh fonarei* [The street of smashed/jaded streetlamps] aired on NTV—the Independent Television Station—in 1999–2000, illustrates this succinctly. In one scene two police officers ask the colleague of a murder suspect whether the suspect had any friends at work. The colleague shakes his head in response and clarifies by saying, “He didn’t drink at all,” which simultaneously communicates that the suspect is worthy of suspicion.⁶⁶ During a drinking session, as the wave of collective inebriation swells, toasts become increasingly concerned with chest-baring, soulful communion. Once the stiffness of everyday formality has been spirited away, Russians joke, a drunken man will throw his arm over the shoulders of his neighbor and lisp inquisitively, “Do you respect me? Do you love me?”⁶⁷ Thus, while serving in the Soviet military, Tatar men must have learned not only how to consume vodka, but also, it seems, how to communicate in rudimentary Russian and perhaps about Russian ideas of friendship.

My suggestion that drinking served as a means of integrating Tatar men and other non-Russians into Russian-speaking Soviet society isn’t based solely upon speculation. In 1999, I was at a dinner party where one of the guests—an old Russian man—learning of my interest in Turkic culture started counting from one to ten in the Chuvash language. He told me that he learned to count in Chuvash during the war from a Chuvash

drinking buddy, who didn't know any Russian when they met, but presumably learned some during the course of their drinking sessions.

On every occasion when I drank alcohol with Tatar-speakers, I observed that they adhere to the Russian tradition of placing empty bottles on the floor and, like Russians, did not have an explanation as to why. Also similar to Russians, Georgians, and others—and different from the drinking habits among, say, Turkish Turks—Tatar-speakers pronounce toasts before each drink. Dissimilar from Russian habits, though, the Tatar-speakers I drank with didn't require everyone to empty his or her glass each time a toast was made. And, when Ramadan overlapped with the most important Soviet holiday, New Year's Eve, in 2000, a number of middle-aged Tatar-speakers I knew chose not to drink alcohol at their celebrations even though they were not observing the fast called *uraza*. Though during the Soviet period Tatars accepted Russian drinking customs, including the requisite pronouncement of toasts, in the post-Soviet period they are adapting those customs to fit their new worldviews.

Even during the Soviet period, however, Tatars maintained their own cultural modes in other spheres of activity. For example, it is a Russian custom before embarking on a journey for the people who are about to part ways to sit in silence on the traveler's suitcases for a moment. In all my partings from Tatars over the course of eight visits to Kazan no one observed this custom. And, unlike Russians, Tatar-speakers never said that sitting at the corner of a table endangers a person's chances of getting married. Rather, sitting so closely around a table that some people end up wrapped around its corners signifies strong affectionate bonds among a group of people, as I observed in the joy-filled smiles on the faces of unmarried Tatar teenagers who willingly took their places at table corners when we would sit down together to drink tea.

Indeed, Tatar-speakers dictate their own very strict rules for appropriate sitting. Adults frequently instruct children to sit beautifully [*matur utyr*], which means that they should sit up straight without fidgeting, their knees together and feet planted squarely on the floor. In particular, girls are supposed to sit beautifully. This is part of *tärbiia*, or upbringing. Lexical equivalents to *tärbiia* exist in languages other than English: in Russian, *vospitanie*, in Turkish *terbiye*, and in French being *bien élevé*. *Tärbiia* is the body of knowledge—or embodied knowledge—a person needs to have acquired in order to comport him- or herself in a socially appropriate fashion. What that comportment consists in varies as widely from one society to another as any other cultural value. Many of my adult Tatar-speaking acquaintances told me that *tärbiia* possesses especial im-

portance because conduct that is considered *tārbiiale*—"with *tārbiia*"—is often at odds with the practices, though not necessarily the ideals, Soviet upbringing produced. Moreover, one of the chronic sources of tension between Kazan's bilingual Tatars and monolingual Russian-speakers, chronically unapparent to the latter group, is Russians' lack of *tārbiia*. An essential element of Tatar *tārbiia* is respect for others—this includes the courtesy men extend to women and the consideration with which women aim to treat men. However, perhaps the most important aspect of Tatar respect pertains to how younger people are expected to behave towards their elders. A difference in age of even a year can cause a younger person to defer to an elder and his or her perceived wisdom. The younger person will signal this by using *abiy*—elder brother—or *apa*—elder sister, as forms of address.

A skit some Tatar teenagers at the Lab School performed for their teachers during an assembly for Teachers' Day portrayed how this norm is instilled. One teenager played the part of their strictest, dearly loved teacher who taught Arabic and was a *hadji*.⁶⁸ In the skit, a student playing the part of the teacher entered the room and said to a girl sitting slouched on the edge of a table, "A Tatar girl does not sit on desks."⁶⁹ In response, the girl slid off the desk and sat down in a chair, beautifully. The gathered teachers were visibly moved by the fact that the urban-born students had called special attention to a moment of Tatar cultural instruction that was almost instinctual for people of village origin. Several teachers laughed so hard that they had to wipe the tears from the corners of their eyes.

National Schools

In the late 1920s, schools in the Russian Republic offered classroom instruction in more than 100 languages. Promoting education in local languages was a means to educate people without knowledge of Russian in how to become socialist citizens. In 1938, Russian became the obligatory second language in all non-Russian schools.⁷⁰ From the mid-1930s on, dozens of "small peoples," including Siberian natives and Roma, were denied native language education. However, officially, all Soviet children received education in their "mother tongue" until Khrushchev decreed otherwise in 1958.⁷¹ Afterwards, "the use of the mother tongue was actively discouraged in the classroom" and some languages were classified as non-viable. Educational resources were redistributed so that 14–17% of classroom time was spent on teaching Russian language.⁷² After non-

Russians helped to defend the Soviet Union during World War II, Russian became more widely known among national minorities and the Soviet authorities came to view local languages as an impediment to socialist upbringing. Although Stalinist glorification of Russian ceased, in practice mastery of Russian had become essential to full participation in Soviet society.

By the early 1960s, the number of languages used in schools had diminished to 47 and by 1982 to 16.⁷³ However, these figures do not account for regional variation. For example, while Tatar schools continued to operate in Tatar villages and in some Tatarstan cities throughout the Soviet period, St. Petersburg's three Tatar-language schools had already been closed by 1936.⁷⁴ In 1961, only 6% of Tatar pupils in the urban areas of the Tatar ASSR studied in Tatar-language schools.⁷⁵ Nationalities the central government had accorded a titular polity below the union-republic level, such as Tatars or Jews, suffered more from these cuts than those nationalities, like Georgians, whose titular polity was a union republic. During the Soviet period, Tatar-language schools in Kazan almost completely disappeared. Depending upon the source, by the mid-1980s either one or two schools in Kazan used Tatar as the language of instruction and neither of them provided an avenue to higher education. In 1917, the year of the Bolshevik Revolution, by contrast, 31 out of 182 schools in Kazan were Tatar.⁷⁶

In 1994, Tatarstan instituted a bilingual education system requiring all children to study Tatar, along with Russian, through high school and into college.⁷⁷ This entailed the development of new types of schools, including Russian-Tatar, Russian and Tatar gymnasias, Turkish gymnasias and Islamic schools. Children became divided into two class types—Tatar and Russian. Tatar classes receive all their instruction in Tatar and study Russian language as a subject, while Russian classes receive all their instruction in Russian and study Tatar as a subject. The Tatar classes contain only Tatar children, while the children in the Russian classes are of different nationalities. For example, at the Lab School, the students in the Tatar classes—called the “Language Class” because Tatar, Russian, English, Arabic, and Turkish were taught—were all Tatar, while the students in the Russian “Humanities Classes” were of mixed descent—Russian, Tatar, Ukrainian, Bashkir, and so on. Tatar classes' curriculum were more focused on Tatar language, literature, history, and culture than Russian classes, where the pupils learn only rudimentary Tatar language and Tatarstan history. The result is that students in Tatar classes are more likely to become identified with things

Tatar, even if they speak Russian in everyday life, while the Russian classes strongly identify with the Russian-speaking world.

In the mid-1990s many parents of russophone Tatar children or children of mixed parentage chose Tatar classes for their children. However, when they realized their children could not function in all-Tatar environments, they moved them to Russian classes. Decisions regarding which classes children should study in are not without political implications. Enrolling one's child in a Tatar class shows support for Tatarstan sovereignty, while withdrawing children from Tatar classes implies retraction of that support.

After 1990, 20 Tatar schools opened in Tatarstan's capital. In 1998, the Kazan school system still suffered from a shortage of 1,300 Tatar teachers, which gap took several years to close. As elsewhere in the former USSR, schools suffer from textbook shortages and purchasing private copies for pupils strains family budgets. After Putin cracked down on sovereignty in 2000, the Tatarstan government started closing Tatar schools. From 2007 to 2009, 111 Tatar schools were shut down.⁷⁸ However, as with statistics regarding the number of Soviet children studying in national schools, no comprehensive figures as to how many schools have been closed are publicly available.⁷⁹ Moreover, since the Russian government decreed in 2009 that Tatar students must take their university entrance exams in Russian, their parents have a strong disincentive to send them to national schools, just as they did under Khrushchev's rule.⁸⁰

During the Soviet period, schools offering instruction in Tatar were primarily located in villages. Consequently, villages came to be considered the locus of authentic Tatar language and cultural practices.⁸¹ The continued strength of Tatar schools in Tatarstan villages, their relative weakness in Tatarstan cities, and their complete absence from Russian cities reflects a three-tiered cultural evolutionary hierarchy with respect to place of habitation. Soviet nationalities policies propelled this hierarchical differentiation by concentrating greater resources in larger settlements and making investments in Russian-language institutions. Thus, the greater the investment in a locale, the more likely it was to be Russian-dominant and a city.

The Limits of National Culture

The very process of developing national cultures in the mid-1920s served to promote russification. In addition to fostering the creation of codified literary languages and national language schooling, the Soviet authorities

controlled the publications, theatrical performances, and other cultural products created for consumption by the USSR's non-Russian nations. Codifying languages restricts their growth because it devalues the imaginative and spontaneous creation of new verbal forms. Likewise, dictating what makes for authentic national culture limits the forms culture can take and eventually marginalizes it from mainstream society. Limiting national cultures created a situation in which people desiring safe access to experiences outside their own official national boundaries were required to do so in Russian language and usually according to Russian cultural norms for social interaction. Exceeding the limits the state established was dangerous to life and liberty.

The Soviet state marginalized Tatar culture in at least three different ways. First, cultural leaders—both political figures and intelligentsia—lost their lives, freedom, and political positions for exceeding the officially accepted boundaries of their national culture. Second, representations of non-Russian Soviet national cultures became marked as particular, in contradistinction to unmarked, universalized cultural forms in the Russian language.⁸² Third, even Tatar-speakers who were fully engaged participants in Soviet institutions occupied social positions profoundly different from those of ethnic Russians.

From the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 through the end of the 1930s, the Soviet secret police arrested and shot leading Tatar cultural figures, turning to Tatar Bolsheviks—the majority of whom were former jadids invited to join the Party—after they had purged the non-Communists.⁸³ Ginzburg's memoir suggests that Kazan's entire Tatar intelligentsia had been arrested by the late 1930s, primarily on charges of bourgeois nationalism.⁸⁴ Other sources indicate that some intellectuals, unreservedly supportive of all Soviet policies, remained free long enough to serve in the Soviet army during World War II, where the majority of them died.⁸⁵ In either case, by the 1930s the burgeoning politically active intelligentsia, supported by the merchant class and financially independent from the government which had emerged in the late 19th century, no longer existed. Its members had all been imprisoned, shot, or forced to leave the country to avoid arrest. One result of these losses was that Tatar culture's urban roots were eradicated from Kazan's historical landscape. The story of Mir Said Sultan-Galiev is a publicized account of what befell Tatars whose aspirations surpassed what Soviet power would tolerate.

Lost Lives

Mir Said Sultan-Galiev, a former *jadid* Tatar ideologue who joined the Communist Party in 1917 and became Stalin's Minister of Nationality Affairs, was first arrested in 1923 for pan-Turkist activities, the year after he proposed that Tatarstan should have union republic administrative status.⁸⁶ He was arrested a second time in 1929 and executed sometime thereafter. Sultan-Galiev was a singular thinker—a communist who sought to apply Leninist ideas to the Soviet Union's eastern peoples, particularly with regards to devising methods for conducting anti-religious propaganda among Muslims.⁸⁷ His political program included measures to establish an autonomous Muslim Communist Party, a Muslim Red Army separate from the Soviet Red Army, a Turan Republic reaching from Kazan to the Pamir Mountains (now in Tajikistan), and a Colonial International, completely independent of the Communist International.⁸⁸

Although Sultan-Galiev's program appears to be based on a kind of Muslim nationalism, the foundation of his thinking was socialist.⁸⁹ He conceived of the relations between East and West as a class struggle, in which the East felt an undying hatred towards the West.⁹⁰ He considered the East, "almost all of which is the object of exploitation by Western European capital," "very rich material for us as revolutionary fuel" and was certain that without the East's material resources, Western Europe's imperialism would crumble.⁹¹ Like contemporary Tatar nation-builders, who see themselves as leaders in developing Russian Federalism, Sultan-Galiev proposed that Tatarstan should be the center for spreading revolution to the East. He considered Tatars "the future pioneers of cultural development for the Soviet Union's Eastern remote regions"—which included the Urals, Siberia, Central Asia, Turkestan, Khiva, Bukhara, and Afghanistan.⁹² After his second arrest, Sultan-Galiev's name was struck from Soviet history until 1990, when he was rehabilitated.⁹³ Sultan-Galiev was too much of a revolutionary to be reined in by the authorities in Moscow. However, many Tatars, much less of a threat to the hegemony of Soviet power, were severely penalized for stretching the boundaries the government put on national culture.

The purges served to dismantle Soviet citizens' pre-revolutionary social networks. People who were afraid of incrimination by association—and often that was the only accusation needed to find a person guilty of treason—distanced themselves from friends and family members whom they considered in danger of being arrested.⁹⁴ Soviet people as a whole experienced the pain of sudden and traumatic loss and resulting isolation,

suffering from collective paranoia that people they had once trusted were not what they seemed. For non-Russian minorities, however, the purges had an even more devastating effect. In what some Tatars refer to as “cultural genocide,” unknown quantities of religious, historical, and sometimes linguistic knowledge were lost as family members disappeared or voluntarily disassociated themselves from each other.

The fate of a well established Kazan Tatar family suggests what must have happened to others about whom less is known. The Apanaevs rose to prominence during the 19th century. They were religious leaders and successful merchants. They used their wealth to build and maintain mosques, open a *mädräse*, publish a newspaper, and support other philanthropic cultural and political undertakings. At least six of them were active members in *Shariq kluby*. After the Bolshevik Revolution, all the family’s adult male members, and some females, were arrested and shot or sent to the Gulag. The most senior male at the time, A. Apanaev, was purged due to his activity as a Socialist Revolutionary, while other family members suffered persecution by association and for continuing to practice Islam.⁹⁵ In 2001, the last Apanaev, Iliuziia, who worked for Tatarstan’s government-run television station, gave me a copy of a documentary she had made about her family and asked me to help her seek out long lost relatives thought to be living in the US.⁹⁶ A friend of the family I spoke to while looking for Iliuziia Apanaeva’s American relatives told me that finding them was difficult, in part because female Apanaevs who survived the purges took their husbands’ last names. Indeed, in her documentary, Apanaeva explains that members of her extended family with other surnames broke their ties with her family in an effort to avoid persecution.

A Russian-speaking Tatar old-age pensioner I know—a schoolteacher who rents out the spare bedroom in her apartment to foreign students—told me her own story. Her father was a Bolshevik arrested in the Great Purge of 1938. She was three years old at the time. She, her brother, and her pregnant mother—all categorized as “enemies of the people”—were evicted from their apartment and lived on the streets of Kazan for six months without help from anyone. Since Kazan’s weather is temperate only three months out of the year and the winter is bitterly cold, at least half that period must have been gruelingly difficult to live through. By some miracle, probably an ugly one, the father was freed.⁹⁷ The friends and relatives who severed their ties when the family became homeless never spoke to them again.

However, “cultural genocide” was not a phenomenon unique to Tatars. All non-Russians were subject to it to one degree or another. For example,

during my visits to Kazan's Karl Fuchs Society I met a broken old man named Brenner, prominent in the German community. Brenner told me he survived the purges, even though his father—a pharmacist—was arrested and shot because his mother was Russian. He didn't explicitly state that he lived because he passed as Russian and wouldn't say much about what he and other Germans suffered under Stalin's rule—only that it was terrible enough to cause him to forget the German he spoke fluently until he was ten years old.

Speaking out against Russian chauvinism, as Tatar intellectuals frequently put it, remained perilous throughout the late Soviet period, even if the punishment wasn't arrest or death. Tatar journalist Venera Yakupova's Russian-language collection of historical anecdotes by Tatar nation-builders called *100 stories about sovereignty* contains several descriptions of such incidents. For example, at the Seventh TASSR Writers Congress in 1968, the Chairman of the Writers Union opened the proceedings with a speech lauding the successes achieved in Tatar publishing and the consequent blossoming of Tatar literature under socialism. When the time came for Rafael Mustafin, Editor of *Kazan Utlary* literary journal, to speak, without other commentary, he stood at the podium and read out statistics on the numbers of pre-revolutionary Tatar-language publications compared with those numbers for 1968. They had dropped by more than 250%. As soon as the Congress concluded, Mustafin was relieved of all his political posts. For several years afterwards, no one would employ him or publish his work and the KGB kept him under active surveillance.⁹⁸

Lost Knowledge

During the Soviet period, most religious ceremonies were outlawed. Some Jews I met at Purim celebrations in the synagogue adjacent to Kazan University told me that previously, they had performed all their essential life-cycle rituals—including *bris* or circumcisions—in secret in their apartments. And while practicing Islam was not explicitly outlawed, it was strongly discouraged. One could not be both a member of the Communist Party, which was necessary for career advancement, and openly religious. Despite this, there is evidence to suggest that many Soviet Turks considered Muslim practices—most importantly among them observing *uraza* during Ramadan—significant identity markers during the latter years of Soviet rule.⁹⁹ Presumably, most Muslims who fasted did so secretly, since the Soviet authorities sought to stamp out *uraza* because they thought it

had a deleterious effect on production output. The Muslim rituals of singing the *azan* (call to prayer), circumcising boys, and inviting a mullah to preside over the name-giving ceremony for two-month-old babies were illegal. Since perestroika, some Tatars have not only readopted these Muslim rituals, but, in true Tatar style, they have also been reading avidly about and publishing copiously on Islam.

Since the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, some broken social networks have been re-knit with the result that some lost knowledge has been recovered. During a 2000 visit I made to Tatarstan, I received several invitations to attend *avyz achuy* or "throat opening" ceremonies—the Tatar name for the fast-breaking feast that occurs after sundown every day during the holy month of Ramadan. Among Tatars, the *avyz achuy* is traditionally a female-only ritual activity. Men may enter the space in which it has taken place only after the religious portion of the gathering is over. During one *avyz achuy* I attended in a one-room village house, the men hid behind a curtain until the women finished their ritual duties. At another a participant joked that, by rights, the tomcat should have been put out of the apartment, but wasn't because he'd track dirt from the staircase landing onto their beds. Once the space in which the *avyz achuy* occurs is no longer sacred, the men of the household return to eat the copious amounts of food left over after the women have had their fill.

Each of the three *avyz achuy* ceremonies I attended was loosely scripted in the same way. After the sun had set, we first "opened our throats" by placing a pinch of salt or a few raisins in our mouths with our right hands. Then, the woman presiding over the *avyz achuy* read a passage from the Quran. After reading in Arabic from the Quran, she said a prayer in Tatar, which could include pleas for "the Tatar people" as the "people who suffered at the hands of Yavuz Ivan" (Ivan the Terrible) and a prayer for each person sitting around the table, moving clockwise from her left hand. The other participants held our hands in the air, palms up, the whole time and responded to her call by pronouncing *amin*. The prayer said, we tucked into an enormous feast of Tatar food, the most lavish of which included an abundance of baked chicken, boiled beef, various savory and sweet pies, dried and fresh fruit, fruit juice and tea. As we ate dessert and drank bottomless cups of tea, all the women present engaged in a ritual conversation about Tatar society and how to improve it.

The first *avyz achuy* I attended was organized by a group of urban middle-aged women. All university educated, they hold prestigious, if not well paid, jobs in cultural, educational, and government institutions. Since we came together in 2001, their collective religiosity has increased. When

I saw them again in 2006, many had begun to attend Friday prayer services at the newly constructed Kol Shārif Mosque in the Kazan Kremlin and some wore modest dress daily. One of the women present at the *avyz achuy* was 90 years old, still upright, but very slight and frail looking. Sufia *apa* was so ancient that her wrinkled, translucent skin was without features, as if she had transcended the cares of the everyday. To describe the wisdom of old people, Tatars say *köp körgän*, *köp belgän*, which means, “She has seen a lot and therefore come to know a lot.” Knowing a lot, Sufia *apa* had taught the other women how to conduct the ceremony properly, and not long afterwards passed away. She had been a great-granddaughter of the 19th-century jadid Shibhaddin Märjani and was related by marriage to Iliuziia Apanaeva, whose acquaintance I made at the *avyz achuy*. As long as the Russian and Tatarstan governments continue to allow open observance of Muslim practices according to passed down traditions, some of the social networks through which Tatars have kept alive the memories of how to do things will be reestablished.

The Universality of Russianness

While destroying pre-revolutionary social networks atomized the worlds of Soviet individuals and families, at the level of Soviet nationalities, atomization particularized minority cultures in ways that made them subordinate to Russian culture’s seeming universality. When a central authority fixes the boundaries of ethnic national cultures—even in the pursuit of promoting the survival and development of those cultures—it narrows the range of possible ways in which individual representatives of those national cultures can participate in society. In the Soviet Union, nationalities policies permanently provincialized people who chose to remain national, that is, maintain their language, social contacts, and separate, non-Russian cultural traditions. As a group minority language speakers were necessarily conservative, since people wishing to enter untried spheres of activity had to break into new cultural zones with unfamiliar rules of engagement.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, people who chose to speak Russian exclusively didn’t lose their nationality brand. Even if minority people spoke unmarked, unaccented Russian, their national status was still officially inscribed in the internal passports they had to produce in every bureaucratic encounter.¹⁰¹

The following story is iconic. While Tatars living in Kazan may only tell the story in full to outsiders like me, they often obliquely refer to it by ironically mentioning “*russkie beriozy*,” that is, “Russian birch trees,”

with a rueful grin. The story concerns the fate of an unnamed, perhaps mythical, Tatar man who objected to the russification of nature. This man is said to have written a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, sometime after World War II, criticizing the widespread practice of describing birch trees as “Russian birch trees” [*russkie beriozy*], the Volga River as the “Russian River Volga” [*rusaskaia reka Volga*], and the severe Eurasian winter as Russian [*rusaskaia zima*]. According to the nation-builder who told me the story, the man asserted that his Tatar nation also lives in Russia and that Tatars also possess these things. Therefore birch trees, the Volga, and winter could not lie exclusively in the domain of ethnic Russians. The man was reportedly arrested as a nationalist.

Indeed, during the postwar period, there was no room for sharing nature with other nationalities. After World War II, Slezkine informs us, Russians came to be treated as the “chosen” people in all official Soviet discourse:

Every day and every hour, in the classroom and at every meeting, the Soviet people...were told that the war had been won by the Russians and their friends; that the Russians had won the war because they were a great nation; that they had been a great nation for as long as Russian had been spoken...¹⁰²

It was the Russian version of manifest destiny.

In the period after World War II, the universality of Russianness, in contrast to the particularity of national cultures, was conveyed not only at meetings and in classrooms, but also via printed media. Books created for Young Pioneers—the Soviet equivalent of Girl and Boy Scouts—demonstrate how Russians are represented as the emblem of progressive Sovietness through being freed from their obligation to work the land. The books depict children from the Soviet Union’s 16 union republics.¹⁰³ The faces of 15 children possess the phenotypical features considered stereotypical of the indigenous populations living in the union republics they are supposed to represent. They are clad in national dress—stylized peasant or nomadic dress—from each of those republics. The one exception is the boy from the Russian Republic, who, unlike his peers, is ethnically unmarked—no slanted eyes or high cheekbones or Asian pigtailed—wearing a Young Pioneer uniform. That is, although Young Pioneers of all nationalities are supposed to wear the uniform, here the child from Russia, apparently an ethnic Russian, emblemizes the normative Young Pioneer, freed from the historical baggage of national culture. Just as whites in the US may see themselves as without ethnicity, Soviet Russians could escape national marking.

However, Soviet Young Pioneer books do more than just represent “Russian” as “Soviet.” Indeed, any children whose nationality wasn’t accorded a union republic during the 1920s state-building period, for example Jews or Siberian natives, are rendered invisible. Additionally, any children living outside their titular union republic, for example, Georgian Armenians, have no place. Meanwhile, the visibility of minority nationalities tidily ensconced within their own union republics was contingent on being represented as peasant, exotic, backwards, cheerful, or some combination thereof.

Marriage and Movies

Prior to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution the Russian Empire was a feudal society in which the overwhelming majority of the population was illiterate peasants. Bolshevik revolutionaries thus saw promoting literacy, industrialization, and urbaneness as central to their modernizing mission and means for ridding Soviet society of its past ills. It took time for this mission to gain credence among non-Bolsheviks living outside of major cities, but eventually sometime after World War II, for both non-Russians and rural Russians, the ideal of Soviet modernity became urban, industrialized, and Russian speaking.

After an experiment with “free marriage” aimed at promoting women’s emancipation that lasted until the mid-1930s, domestic partnerships ceased to be recognized as marriages, divorce became difficult, and abortions were made illegal. In 1955 the law was changed to permit abortions for medical reasons, and again in 1968 to allow them without restrictions. At present, in Russia more pregnancies end in abortion than live birth. One consequence of Russia’s high abortion rate—in conjunction with a loss of about 30,000 inhabitants annually to emigration and a high death rate—is that Russia’s population is decreasing by 700,000 people each year. In May 2006 President Vladimir Putin took steps to counteract this demographic crisis. He decreed that the child support payments women receive from the government will double to \$55/month and instituted a one-time payment of \$9,200 to mothers who have a second child.¹⁰⁴

As soon as they hit their twenties, women in Russia receive chronic browbeatings from their mothers and other older women to hurry up and marry before it’s too late. This is not a new phenomenon. As Russian feminist Ekaterina Alexandrova noted in a 1984 article called “Why Soviet Women Want to Get Married,” marriage has been touted as a civic

duty necessary for increasing a population depleted by World War II. The result is that women felt pressured to marry in order to gain social acceptance. Writing about the Soviet period, Alexandrova explained that government propaganda “persistently and relentlessly inculcates in women the idea that only in a family can they find happiness, only by acquiring the stamp of *married* in their passports will they be complete as human beings....Many women are keenly sensitive to the fact that writing *not married* in the appropriate blank is shameful and degrading.”¹⁰⁵ Or in the words of a middle-aged Kazakh woman I interviewed in 1995 “The idea is to be married. Only one state is normal for you.”¹⁰⁶ Marriage between a national minority and a Russian almost without fail produced Russian-speaking and Russian-identified children. Even the children of two non-Russians would often choose to identify themselves as “Russian” in their passports. Thus, when a non-Russian married outside of her ethnic group, the result more often than not was to increase the country’s Russian population.

This idea that women must marry in order to be normal is clearly reflected in Soviet cinema, which the Communist Party actively used to shape society from October 1917 on.¹⁰⁷ While films like *Devchata* (1961), a sweet romantic comedy about a naïve young woman helping to build civilization out of the Siberian wilderness, continued an earlier Soviet tradition of painting rural life in the rosiest of strokes, the 1970s ushered in films about modern urban people, particularly women, free from the obligation to work physical labor. The message in movies like *Office Romance* (1977) and *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979)—which won an American Oscar—is that successful career women can avoid loneliness, only if they assume traditionally feminine roles so as to appeal to men without high professional qualifications. These two films in effect blame women without men for their plight, though unmarried women have been a society-wide phenomenon throughout the Soviet period and afterwards as a result of the heavy losses of male life to World War II, the Gulag, the Soviet war in Afghanistan (1979–1989), and currently due to alcoholism and alcohol-related deaths.¹⁰⁸ For lonely women who are members of national minorities, such films imply that the domain in which romance occurs is Russian-speaking. Tatar women I know—young and old—adore all three of these films and sit glued to the screen in raptures when they are shown on television. Of course the movie scripts are in Russian. The characters all have Russian names. And the themes are Soviet. Just as Soviet films attributed individual blame to the mass of unmarried Soviet women whose professional quali-

fications and independence (the films imply) emasculate men, they likewise pressure unmarried non-Russian women to reject their national cultures and marry Russian.¹⁰⁹

Cultural Products

In a state which guaranteed equal rights to all minorities, Russian nationalism made itself felt in the broad range of things to do in Russian compared to the relatively few activities that could occur within the confines of Russia's minority languages. For example, there are no Soviet-period dictionaries that provide translations from a minority language into any language other than Russian. Rather, all Soviet-period dictionaries translated between Russian and subordinate languages, while Russian-English, Russian-French, and Russian-Turkish dictionaries were in print. Since 1991, some faltering efforts have been made to create Tatar-Turkish dictionaries, for instance, but they serve little practical purpose, since the focus is on synonyms—a way of pointing to perceived cultural similarities as opposed to facilitating communication. A similar kind of subordination occurs with regards to the representation of artistic genres, reflecting how national arts are inflected as “folk.” In the performing arts, for example, Russian language and culture possess the pervasive power of universality, in contradistinction to the particular, provincialized reach of minority languages and cultures.¹¹⁰

While censors no longer explicitly control the content of present-day Tatar theater, as they did during the Soviet period, its forms are still quite limited. Kazan's two Tatar-language theaters stage excellently executed, professional productions. Yet, while the single Russian-language theater presents tragedies, comedies, farces, and musicals, originally written in many different languages and staged on sets approximating the locales where those languages are spoken, the Tatar theaters' plays are nearly all romantic musical comedies originally written in Tatar and set almost without exception in idealized Tatar villages. Even the few Tatar tragedies, likewise set in idealized villages, are musicals. In addition to romantic musical comedies, several Tatar operas exist, only one of which—*Altynchäch*—is ever performed. Moreover, Kazan is an exception with regards to minority language theater. The most sophisticated Tatar-language performance one could see in Moscow or St. Petersburg, in each of which cities hundreds of thousands of Tatars live, would be a school play. To see a production of non-Soviet origin—Shakespeare or Molière

or the Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof*—people must attend Kazan's Russian-language theater.

In 2006, the pre-revolutionary practice of staging translations of Russian classics in Tatar was revived, as a Tatar version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* played at the Kamal Tatar State Academic Theatre. Passing by the theater one day in June 2006 after the season had closed, I pointed to the marquis and asked a Tatar friend why *Three Sisters* had been introduced to the Tatar repertoire, since all Tatars understand Russian and could see the play in the original. He responded that it wasn't done for Tatar audiences, but to make Russians feel good.

The genre asymmetry of theatrical performances in Kazan has at least one salient social effect. It provides people with fodder for disparaging Tatar theater as primitive and crude, which most critics likewise perceive to indicate the level and breadth of Tatar culture's development. Russians and some Tatars assume that Tatar theater reflects the essential simplicity and lack of sophistication of Tatar culture, and not the fact that, as a politicized genre, the forms Tatar theater can take have been curtailed.¹¹¹ One Kazan Russian married to a Tatar explained to me that Tatar theater was thematically superficial due its musical comedy elements—singing, dancing—and displays of national costume. She contrasted this to the ability of the town's Russian theater to stage tragedies, which she considered "serious productions."¹¹² During the same conversation, this woman told me her daughter had no interest in Tatar language because the girl was naturally drawn to the superior culture.

The provincialization of Tatar culture likewise affects the trajectories along which both people and ideas circulate. As in every bilingual situation, the distribution of languages in Kazan is asymmetrical, a fact well illustrated by theatre audience's spheres of movement. Village-born Tatars, even those who have lived in Kazan for years, often experience a sense of unease venturing out into the Russian-speaking world. Many believe that their national culture is less urbane than Russian culture and they feel uncomfortable entering domains of traditional high culture where only Russian is spoken, such as theaters. Each season thousands of Tatar villagers travel on special excursion buses from their rural homes to see plays in Kazan's Tatar theaters. Equivalent excursions for villagers who may wish to see performances in Russian don't exist. Consequently, these audiences never gain exposure to a broader theater-going experience. Thus, even though Tatar-speakers have knowledge of two languages, which creates the potential for a sophisticated and complex interpretative ability, their exposure to certain ideas may be more limited than that of monolingual Russians.

The situation for Russian-speaking audiences is quite different. The Tatar theaters provide simultaneous translation of their performances into Russian.¹¹³ Consequently, Russian-speakers who care to do so—and many Russians I spoke to went to see Tatar plays on a regular basis—find the Tatar theaters easily accessible. But the translations, delivered with lackluster intonation, are bereft of the dramatic lyricism and linguistic richness that exist in the original. Consequently, accommodating Russian monolingualism encourages Russian-speakers to add incomplete, superficial versions of the ideas expressed in Tatar plays to their repertoire of experiences. Indeed, the quality of the translations is so poor that Tatar audience members who rent headphones—afraid their knowledge of literary Tatar is inadequate to the task of comprehending theatrical language—frequently discard them as soon as a performance begins. Kazan theater-going practices reflect a larger asymmetrical power relationship according to which Tatars accommodate themselves to Russian linguistic expectations, while Russian-speakers make no corollary accommodations to Tatars.

Tatar music similarly suffers from limitations that mark it as “national,” in contradistinction to the perceived universality of Russian music. Officially Tatar music only exists in four varieties—rarely played classical music, songs Soviet ethnographers defined as “folk” [*xalyk jyr-lary*], *mongly* songs—the topic of Chapter 7, and a variety of pop music comparable to contemporary American country music with regards to its down-home feeling, formulaic predictability, the performers’ elaborate costumes, and the low social status of its audience. The lyrics of these songs almost always concern some aspect of idealized village life. In contradistinction to Tatar plays, Russian-speakers never consume Tatar music—it is distinctly uncool.

By contrast, music sung in Russian can assume any imaginable genre, without provoking eyebrow raising with regards to its potential authenticity. There is Russian classical music, opera, jazz, rock, rap, pop, ska, and so on. Tatars who listen to music outside the officially imagined rural geography of Tatar music once consumed songs exclusively in Russian. Since perestroika, however, they listen not only in Russian, but in other languages, like English and Turkish, as do ethnic Russians. Indeed, Turkish pop star Tarkan is such a hit in Russia that Filip Kirkorov, Russian pop icon Alla Pugacheva’s fourth husband, popularized a song that uses the melody of Tarkan’s song *Şıkıdım*.



Figure 1.1. Üzebez's
"I Speak Tatar!" Badge

In an effort to counteract Tatar culture's provincialization, a loosely organized Kazan youth movement called Üzebez (www.uzebez.org), created in 2005, has been promoting music that appeals to youth—singer/songwriter music, rock, and rap. In April 2006, they staged a concert of underground, urban Tatar music on Kazan's pedestrian Bauman Street, which attracted an audience of 4,000 young people. At the concert they handed out badges with the words "I Speak Tatar" to those who did and dictionaries "*My First 150 Tatar Words*," to those who didn't. Most of the songs played at the concert have been banned from the radio by the Tatarstan government due to their perceived nationalist content. Moreover, because no studios in Kazan will work with them, the musicians have to travel to Moscow, where the local Tatar community supports them, to record their albums. The April event was funded by Open Russia, a foundation established by now-imprisoned Russian businessman and former owner of Yukos Oil, Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The Russian government froze Open Russia's assets in March 2006 without explanation, which marked an end to their ability to fund Üzebez and other independent democratic organizations.

False Divides

During the revolutionary period Soviet ethnographers charted the various peoples living on Soviet territory. Part of this charting included ascribing to each new found nationality a level of economic development and corresponding designation as nomadic, rural, or urban. One consequence of their work was that by the 1950s, among the hundred or so nationalities living within the Soviet Union, Soviet media sources only represented one of them—Russians—as both rural and urban dwellers.

Designating people either as urban or rural, however, belies the way that Soviet people live their lives. Take bazaars as an example. The stereotype is that the merchants are rural and the buyers urban. Historically, even nomads spent time in cities, where they traded extensively and sometimes intermarried with settled peoples.¹¹⁴ Currently, bazaars—which are considered profoundly filthy, but also backwards and rural necessities of post-Soviet life—exist in all cities. The designation of bazaars as filthy metaphorically alludes to the garbage strewn on their grounds, the negative associations former

Soviets have with regards to making money through resale (*spekulatsiia*), and the foul language bazaar workers are said to use. In Kazan, the bazaar is marked as a Tatar-language zone and many people thus perceive Tatar as a kind of trade pidgin. In actuality, Kazan's bazaars are jam-packed with both rural and urban people. Vendors include "nomadic" Kyrgyz and "settled" Tajiks and Uzbeks from Central Asia, networks of Azeri brothers from the Caucasus who like to set up house with local women, and urban Tatars and Russians hired as day laborers.

Moreover, the people who go to Kazan's bazaars as shoppers—sometimes the merchants' relatives—are not necessarily city folk. I recall sitting down to eat the Tatar meat pies called *peremäch* and drink vodka with one vendor I knew. A Russian woman married to a Tatar, she had caused a scandal among her in-laws by quitting her well-respected job as a schoolteacher to sell clothing in the bazaar—considered to be a low-grade occupation for the uneducated. But, she argued, the pay was more reliable, and no one could dispute that. On this particular day, Alina had worked all day and just had time to clean up before coming to the evening family party. As usual, she was tired and today she was irritable because some rich Tatar women had come to the bazaar from the village to shop. They clearly had a lot of money, but Alina wasn't able to convince them to spend any at her stall because she didn't know enough Tatar to entice them to buy from her. She could only say a few words—*Isänmesez* [Hello], *Kil monda* [Come here], and *matur* [beautiful].

Categorizing Soviet peoples as rural or urban not only discounts their past and present-day economic and social interdependency, but moreover disregards the large amounts of time urban people currently spend in rural settings, often with close relatives. And despite post-World War II representations of Russia, urban people have not been freed from working the land. On the contrary, at the turn of the 21st century more and more city dwellers in Russia spend the warm months farming plots of land called dachas.¹¹⁵ Dachas serve the dual purpose of providing land for ex-Soviets to grow fruits and vegetables to get through the difficult winter and spring months and a summer holiday retreat away from the urban bustle.

More specifically to Tatarstan, the urban-rural dichotomy contradicts evidence that Kazan Tatars' historical movement back and forth between city and country continues into the 21st century. Despite the existence of a vibrant urban intellectual Tatar culture prior to the October Revolution, from the latter decades of socialism through the present day Tatar-speakers express a patriotic attachment to the soil of their birth villages.¹¹⁶ This attachment—idealized though it may be—often forms the basis for

contemporary Tatar literary works, news reports, music videos, and oral histories. Attachment to the land creates a foundation for maintaining village ways in the city and, significantly, makes an unambiguous claim to indigenous rights to Tatarstan's territory. The tendency to maintain ties to the country continues, as most Tatar-speakers living in Kazan "return" to birth villages as often as once a week and for long periods during the summer months. In cases in which a person's own village is far away or no family members remain there, people usually spend time in their spouses' villages.¹¹⁷ The strength of urban-dwelling Tatars' ties to their home villages can be materially measured by the quantity of perishable groceries from those villages, especially dairy products, they keep in their city refrigerators.

Tatar migration patterns differ from the general Soviet practice of commuting during warm weekends and summer holidays to a dacha. Rural-born Tatars often possess dachas, which they may visit in addition to their natal villages. More importantly, Tatars conventionally speak of returning home to their villages, even if they were born elsewhere, whereas people speaking of visiting dachas use the verb "to go."¹¹⁸ And while codes of acceptable behavior differ at the dacha—just as they do in villages—from those current in the city, normative behavior for the dacha and the village also differ significantly from each other. At the dacha it is acceptable to wear clothing inappropriate for urban public domains, such as a brassiere with no shirt or a t-shirt and underpants. In my visits to Tatar villages, I never saw anyone walk outside half-clothed.

When they enter a Tatar village, Tatars cross a boundary of cultural and linguistic practices. Women remove the fur hats they wear in the city some six months out the year and don headscarves. And men and women alike switch from speaking a mixture of Russian and Tatar to speaking only Tatar, as conversations become both more formalized and kin-inflected than they tend to be in Kazan. Indeed, my limited observation of Tatar village life showed that while in them Tatars adhere to age-hierarchy deference formulas and consistently use kin terms, preceded by first names, when addressing or referring to relatives and non-relatives alike. By contrast, most Tatarstan Russian-speakers who migrated to towns and cities during the Soviet period usually maintain only loose and infrequent ties to the villages from which they emigrated, perhaps as a way of differentiating themselves from Tatars. While the Russian-dominant children whose schools I visited almost daily in 1999–2000 in Kazan never talked about going home to their villages, the Tatar-dominant children often did.

Hayseeds, or Nation-builders from the *Kolkhoz*

An urban Tatar teacher whom I heard lecture on 1970s Soviet history to students at the Lab School in 2000 asserted that Soviet people were easily manipulated because the majority of them were villagers living in cities who, unfamiliar with urban culture, did whatever they were told. She may have spoken from personal knowledge, since both her parents were rural migrants.

When they reached adulthood, rural Soviets often moved from the *kolkhozes* or collective farms upon which they had been born and raised to the nearest city.¹¹⁹ The adult children of such migrants I know in St. Petersburg cite the absolute lack of goods—no shoes at all for sale in village stores—as a primary reason for making the move to a new life. Village Tatars have followed this general pattern of migration, although not, according to them, for material reasons. Rather, they say they moved to Kazan in hopes of receiving higher education. What they discovered there was an environment inimical to Tatar language and the people who spoke it. Both formal and informal institutions continue to pressure migrants to discard Tatar language and culture for Russian language and culture.¹²⁰ Since many of them had no previous experience conversing in Russian, they found themselves at an extreme disadvantage in their new environment. The result of this migration pattern was that linguistic differences came to be perceived as national, and national differences as geographic, eventually, emerging in politicized forms.¹²¹ With the rarest exceptions—I only know two who grew up in Kazan—the Tatar nation-builders active in Tatarstan's sovereignty movement in the 1990s were village-born and raised, having moved to Kazan in the 1960s and 1970s to go to university.

Tatar-speakers migrating from the countryside during the Soviet period encountered an environment hostile to their language and culture. Except for occasions when their experiential knowledge became professionalized—that is, they became academics or journalists who worked in Tatar or were incorporated into Party cadres—Tatar-speakers frequently ended up in low-status positions requiring minimal training, as janitors, unskilled laborers, or selling things at bazaars or in shops. Despite their low social status, the sales positions afforded migrants the advantage of firsthand access to the things they sold, which (I am told) they were more likely to share with other Tatar-speakers than with Russians. Working as a janitor or unskilled laborer brought no appreciable benefits.

Rural Migration and Assimilation Pressures

Given that Tatar had been transformed into a “village language” by the 1940s, if not earlier, the question of why Tatars expressed strong nationalist sentiments once perestroika afforded them the opportunity to do so can be understood as a story about villagers who moved to the big city and had difficulty accommodating to urban life.¹²² Hayat *apa*’s first experiences in Kazan are illustrative of those of many Tatar-speakers who migrated to the city to attend university. At the time of our conversation, Hayat *apa* was in her early 40s, married with two children. She had a delicate nose, full mouth, and dark hair, which she wore gathered up on top of her head. She always regarded the world with an open, unwavering brown-eyed gaze and her demeanor conveyed a majesty that literally stopped traffic. Hayat *apa* described her arrival in Kazan in 1970, at the age of 17, this way:

I graduated from a Tatar school. I grew up in a Tatar village. When I came to Kazan and wanted to get into the university, they said to me, “Take your oral history exam in Russian.” I had never studied history in Russian. I didn’t speak Russian until I was 17 years old. It was completely unnecessary in my village. I had good teachers, but they didn’t teach us how to speak Russian. It’s as if *you* were told that you had to take an ethnography exam in Tatar.

“You don’t know Russian, then go to the Agriculture Institute,” they said. O-ho, Tatars were so afraid of higher education institutions! A lot of them went to the Agriculture Institute because you could speak Tatar there.

Somehow, Hayat *apa* managed to get in to Kazan University, but she added:

The first years were so difficult. They required that you know Russian, but they didn’t teach it. So, I moved in with a Russian *babushka*. I rented a room from her and started speaking Russian with her.

The story of Hayat *apa*’s move to Kazan arose out of a conversation about Russian chauvinism, itself sparked by her asking me what Americans thought of the war in Chechnya begun in 1999. At the time, we were sitting in the back of a school classroom, in the teacher’s “office”—a section separated from the main body of the room by a row of bookcases. The classroom door opened frequently while Hayat *apa* was talking. We would hear voices coming indistinctly from the hallway or sometimes quite clearly in the room just on the other side of the bookcases. Each time

she heard the door creak, Hayat *apa* looked up and asked nervously who was there. Only after the intruder identified him- or herself and then left the room would she resume speaking.

Echoing statements Tatar-speakers made to me innumerable times about being chastised, shamed, ridiculed, and even beaten when they spoke Tatar in public, Hayat *apa* described her early reception in Kazan, “For speaking my own native language in my own city, they expelled me from the tram. They made an example of me and I was forced to go on foot.”

Evidence of intolerance for speaking Tatar in public domains comes from written accounts as well. One from the 1980s describes how a young geological physicist named Rifkat Kurmashev preparing for a business trip to Egypt suddenly remembered that his grandmother was expecting him for lunch. He asked to use the telephone in the Ministry of Oil Production, where he was awaiting his travel documents, to call her and explain—in Tatar, since she didn’t know Russian—why he couldn’t come. When he hung up the phone, the woman sitting next to it yelled at him, “Young man, you should be ashamed of yourself!” He looked around the room and noticed dozens of government bureaucrats staring at him as if he were a savage.¹²³

Although incidents like this ceased to occur some time after 1990 when Tatar was made a government language—at least I never observed any in the late 1990s—Russian-speakers still demand that Tatars speak Russian to each other in their presence. Indeed, once Putin compromised Tatarstan sovereignty in 2000, these demands became more frequent. Moreover, a tacit understanding exists in linguistically mixed settings that speaking Tatar for any length of time in the presence of Russians creates mounting tension and is barely tolerable.

For example, in December 2000, I took a bus to the town of Derbyshki, a suburb of Kazan, to take a look at Tatar audio and video resources housed in a Tatarstan Ministry of Education office there. I had met Rifkat, the technician who invited me to view the resources, in Kazan at a conference on education. A middle-aged Tatar with awkward glasses and tobacco-stained teeth, Rifkat clearly took great pleasure in having the opportunity to show me his materials. When I arrived, he introduced me to his boss and the office secretary—both Tatar women. Rifkat’s boss took my heavy winter coat and fur hat and hung them in her office. Then the three of them invited me to sit with them at a dinged up wooden table surrounded by plastic chairs. With customary Tatar hospitality they made me a cup of tea and placed an open box of chocolates in front of me. When I objected that I couldn’t drink tea alone, they assured me that they

had just had theirs. As I drank my tea, they politely answered my questions about their office and what it produced.

Afterwards, Rifkat showed me the collection of audio and video tapes for loan to schoolteachers in Kazan and its environs and we picked out several videotapes to view. While we were watching them, back at the wooden table drinking tea, a fourth officemate appeared and Rifkat introduced her to me. A stocky middle-aged Russian woman with inexpertly dyed hair, she made herself a cup of tea and joined us. After a few minutes, the Russian officemate began speaking in Russian at a volume louder than the Tatar videotape, making it impossible to follow the soundtrack. During the course of the next hour, she repeatedly interrupted our viewing of Tatar tapes, telling me in Russian that Tatars no longer think in their own language and therefore there was no reason to study it. Continuing our earlier conversation on Tatar language materials, which had taken place in Tatar, would have been impossible without explicitly excluding her. Later, when Rifkat accompanied me to the bus stop—a custom called *ozatu*—I expressed my irritation about his Russian officemate’s rude behavior. Rifkat literally shrugged off the incident and claimed that her behavior hadn’t been inappropriate, without offering any further explanation.

While in St. Petersburg in July 2001, I made contact with members of the Tatar community there. One woman, Nailye—whose family had lived in Petersburg for generations—was so excited by my ability to speak Tatar that she arranged a formal reception for me at the offices of the Permanent Representative of Tatarstan to St. Petersburg. Nailye was not moved so much by my interest in the Republic of Tatarstan, to which she felt only a loose connection, but rather by the respect for Tatars as people my study of Tatar language implied.¹²⁴ Also invited were a couple of Tatar journalists, a folklorist, and several other notable community people. The director of the Permanent Representative was away on holiday, so his second-in-command received me.

The first few minutes of our conversation took place in Tatar. Nailye and the journalists asked me questions about my anomalous linguistic knowledge. Soon, however, one of the journalists turned to the second-in-command and asked, in Russian, if he understood the exchange. The second-in-command smilingly nodded and said, also in Russian, that he was catching most of it. It immediately became clear that the second-in-command was a Tatarstan Russian, who had taken a requisite two months of Tatar lessons, but had no functional ability in the language. As soon as the other Tatars realized that this was the situation, the rest of our meeting took place in Russian.

It turned out, though, that the Russian diplomat received preferential treatment because of his ethnicity, for although several of us had been under the impression that he was the only person in the room not fluent in Tatar, we discovered afterwards that this wasn't the case. One of the office clerks, a St. Petersburg Tatar in his twenties, was also monolingual in Russian. However, the clerk didn't let anyone know he couldn't follow the conversation until after the meeting ended. The concern had been that the ethnic Russian wouldn't understand and, as a consequence, feel left out.

As venues of Tatarstan government activity concerned with promoting Tatar language, these two examples both represent contexts in which, comparatively, Russian chauvinism is on the wane. This, however, is not currently the general trend across Russia.

Coinciding with Vladimir Putin's assumption of Russia's presidency in 2000, and reinforced by his policies of recentralization and russification of the Russian Federation's government, ethnic Russian nationalism has been on the rise. In 2000, Russian nationalism made itself felt in television advertising and food product packaging, where the adjective *ruskii* (ethnic Russian), as opposed to *rossiiskii* (territorially Russian), was increasingly employed to sell products. For example, that summer a new brand of beer, Bochkarev, appeared on the Russian market. Although apparently the company that makes the beer is Danish, television advertisements for Bochkarev marketed it as Russian beer [*russkoe pivo*].

When I visited Kazan after a five-year absence in June 2006, television—once interesting to watch both as a social barometer and a source of entertainment—had been profoundly dumbed down. This dumbing down was two-pronged. On the one hand, there were even more low-grade American programs than previously and the History and National Geographic Channels had been introduced. On the other, television had undergone a process of re-Sovieticization. Thus, even though talk shows still existed and sometimes concerned controversial topics like AIDS, they all had the stale, rehearsed air of propaganda and lacked previously existing opportunities for audience members to express their views in open discussion. NTV, once known for its criticism of the war in Chechnya and cleverly written shows, like *Ulitsa razbitikh fonarei* and *Kukli*—cutting political satire with puppets—when it was under Vladimir Gusinsky's ownership, broadcast leaden, completely forgettable programs. Additionally, several new government-controlled stations had been created: among these *Russkii Iliuzion*, which only showed lighthearted, mindless Soviet-era musicals and comedies, and *Zvezda* or *Star*—a Soviet patriotic sym-

bol—which only televised pro-Soviet programs, either period films about defending the Fatherland or documentaries about the Great Patriotic War. Indeed, *Zvezda*'s website (www.tvzvezda.ru) states that the channel's mission is to promote knowledge of Russia as a *velikaia derzhava* or "mighty state power"—a national ideology dating back to the early 17th century.¹²⁵ During commercial breaks *Zvezda* aired public service announcements in which teenagers with ethnic Russian names described with pride the heroic bravery grandfathers they had never met demonstrated during World War II battles. These television programs, presumably created for everyone to watch, depicted the Russian Federation as if only one nation—Russians—not over a hundred, lives there. And echoing earlier times, they imply that the Soviet Union won World War II thanks to the heroism of Russians alone.

For Tatar-speakers, this form of exclusion does not represent a new trend. They complain that Russians have been appropriating shared national treasures all along. After recounting the incident during which she was forced off the tram, Hayat *apa* invoked the iconic story about the russification of nature:

It's always the Great Russian birches, the Russian river Volga, the Great Russian people... But, I also live here. We also have birch trees and the Volga. I consider my own people to be great, my own language to be great.

Like the stories Tatars tell about being harassed for speaking their language in public, bringing up the russification of nature serves as a metaphorical reminder of colonialism that Tatars employ at moments when there are no Russians present to take offense.

When I asked other educated Tatar-speakers of Hayat *apa*'s generation whether her account rang true, they all acquiesced. Tatar ethnologist Damir Iskhakov told me that in the 1960s, at least, there was a cadre of Tatar academics who helped chauffeur Tatar children seeking admittance to Kazan University through the exam process by allowing them to take their exams in Tatar. However, he added that, after being admitted, it took two to three years for them to learn to perform adequately in seminars. Further conversations I had with Tatar intellectuals and cultural leaders suggest that Hayat *apa*'s experience was the norm for village Tatars moving to Kazan since the 1960s, if not earlier.

Moreover, one historian informed me that Fäüzia Bäyrämova—the most extreme Tatar nationalist to emerge during sovereignty—had become radicalized because she was a villager who migrated to Kazan for university education and never found her niche. During an interview in

2000 Bāyrāmova informed me that when she had tried to gain admission to Kazan's Aviation-Technical Institute, she was told, "You don't know Russian. Go back to your village." Bāyrāmova claimed that she saw her first Russian then, at the age of 16. However, Bāyrāmova also said that Russians in Kazan are not cruel (*yavuz*—the epithet used to describe Ivan the Terrible). Only when she went to live in Mongolia in 1975, nine years later, and observed Russian chauvinism there, she said, did she encounter what she calls the "Russian character."

Though she was born and raised in a village some 100 kilometers distant, Hayat *apa* refers to Kazan as her own city. Similarly, Bāyrāmova complained that she was told that without knowledge of Russian, she would never get anywhere in life, "Even though," she stressed to me, "I was living in Tatarstan." Like Bāyrāmova, Hayat *apa* feels entitled to the right to use her "own language" in public because Kazan is the capital of Tatarstan, her titular national republic. This is a sentiment generally shared by middle-aged, educated Tatar-speakers, even those not originally from Tatarstan.

Aisyly, a Tatar born in the neighboring republic of Bashkortostan, now lives in Kazan where she teaches at a university. One evening in early 2000 as we strolled down a Kazan street in the Old Tatar Quarter and passed a mosque from which the *azan*—the Muslim call to prayer—was being sung, she suddenly revealed to me that it was only when she visited Turkey a few years before, in the late 1990s, that she felt free for the first time in her life to be Tatar and Muslim. "Because there," she stated simply, "you didn't have to worry about including Russians in everything."

Conclusions

In this chapter my goal has been to present historical background on the place of Tatar language and culture in Kazan under tsarist rule and during the Soviet period with an eye to explaining Tatar perspectives about these matters. My inquiry suggests that, despite Soviet policies to develop national cultures and languages, in the 20th century Kazan's indigenous language once more became marginalized from urban, urbane, universal kinds of interactions. Marginalizing Tatar language marginalized speakers of Tatar in at least two ways. First, Tatar-speakers report they used to feel at ease only in domains marked as rural, such as the city's bazaars and Agricultural Institute. Second, Tatar-speakers who insisted on their right to circulate outside those domains received daily reminders of the ways in

which they were differently positioned from the Soviet Union's "first" citizens—ethnic Russians. These reminders came in the form of ideology, examples of which include representations of Tatars as limited in their forms of artistic and emotional expression, and practice, such as petty acts of discrimination against people who spoke a language other than Russian.

Although many Tatars were able to adapt to the institutional requirements of late socialism and even excel within those institutions, they were constantly subject to other kinds of tensions invisible, unfelt, or overlooked by monolingual Russian-speakers. During perestroika, people who began to participate in nation-building processes—many, though not all of whom, were Communists—underwent a kind of transformation from seeing themselves principally as members of a unified Soviet society to experiencing as primary their position as members of a Tatar speech community. This transformation has been maintained by a reconstitution of social networks supported, in part, by new Tatarstan government institutions and the ways that Tatar speech communities overlap with ethnic, cultural, political, and territorial Tatar communities. During the height of sovereignty (1990–2000), Tatarstan Russian-speakers were eager for admission into these social networks, though their enthusiasm abated once Vladimir Putin became Russia's president.

The post-Soviet revival of Tatar national culture as an urban phenomenon can be understood in part as an effort by people whose purported or real ancestors were exiled to the countryside to "repossess" Kazan from city folk. Physical exile occurred when Ivan the Terrible conquered the region in 1552. Soviet-period nationality policies effected a second wave of exile by denuding Tatar national culture of its urban elements—both representationally and in actuality—as the state arrested, killed, and otherwise repressed members of the Tatar cultural intelligentsia. After World War II, exile assumed a metaphorical form as the children of migrants from the surrounding countryside had to assimilate into russophone society in order to fully participate in Kazan life. By the 1950s, officially sanctioned and recognized Tatar culture had become categorically rural, positioned at a level of cultural evolutionary development definitively lower than official Russian culture.

Soviet-period marginalization of national minority cultures was a pervasive pattern across the USSR. It served to erase urban components of minority national cultures and to present them as primitive and rural. The tendency to ruralize non-Russian nationalities was parallel to marking of national cultures as particular, in contradistinction to the perceived univer-

salinity of things Russian. Because the politics of language and national culture overlapped, the post-Soviet emergence of linguistic differences as nationalized is a predictable one.

Despite arguments to the contrary, post-Soviet nation-builders may not necessarily be opportunistic Communists who have adopted a new label in order to maintain access to political power and the economic benefits that power entails.¹²⁶ Within Soviet structures national minorities received the promise of an equal standing they could never realize. Hence, when given the chance to begin voicing their concerns about what was wrong with Soviet society—the heart of Gorbachev’s call for glasnost—they began to find commonalties in the sources of their dissatisfaction and to mobilize to create political changes towards, many hoped, greater equality for all. The next chapter explores a vital forum for airing these concerns—letters to the editor published in Tatarstan’s two main newspapers during the Soviet Union’s collapse.

Notes

1 Zakiev (1991); Kreindler (1989); Martin (2001); Slezkine (1994b).

2 Dowler (2001).

3 Sultanov (2004: 198).

4 Amirxanov (2005).

5 See Hughes (2006[1934]) for a striking comparison of the lives of Central Asian Turks with American Blacks.

6 For more on the conquest of Kazan, see Halperin (1985) and especially Pelenski (1974).

7 Ruzel Yusupov, who at the time was the Rector of Kazan’s Pedagogical University, asserted in a lecture that he gave at the University of Washington in August 1998 that diplomatic exchanges between Muscovy and Kazan in the 16th century were bilingual and that Turkic, he said “Tatar,” was the *lingua franca*. Pelenski (1974).

8 Khujin and Sitdikov (2005: 108); Ramusio (1583), v. ii. f. 117.

9 Khujin and Sitdikov (2005: 108–109).

10 Khujin and Sitdikov (1996); Pelenski (1974).

11 Khujin and Sitdikov (2005).

12 Sultanov (2004: 137).

13 Khujin and Sitdikov (1996).

14 Sultanov (2004).

15 Khudiakov (1991: 168–171).

16 Sultanov (2004: 190).

17 Sultanov (2004).

18 Geraci (2001). See also Endnote 35 in Chapter 2.

19 Sultanov (2004: 194–5).

- 20 Sultanov (2004).
- 21 See Brower and Lazzerini (1997); Geraci (2001); Geraci and Khodarkovsky (2001); Kefeli (1997); and Werth (2002), inter alia, for background on Russia's missionary efforts among conquered peoples.
- 22 Sultanov (2004: 197).
- 23 Le Strange (2003: 244).
- 24 Roshwald (2001).
- 25 Iskhakov (2005). Geraci (2001).
- 26 Similar reforms took place in Japan as well. In the Ottoman Empire, the reform movement was called *tanzimat* while the Japanese modernization movement is known as the Meiji reforms.
- 27 For more on jadidism see Khalid (1998) or any of Lazzerini's (1973, 1975, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1997) seminal works.
- 28 Geraci (2001).
- 29 Amirxanov (2005); Iskhakov (2005).
- 30 Amirxanov (2005: 51).
- 31 Amirxanov (2005: 48).
- 32 Gasprinskii (1985[1881]). Russifying ethnic and religious minorities was not necessarily a goal of the tsarist regime. See, for example, Alpatov (2000).
- 33 Amirxanov (2005: 48–49).
- 34 Amirxanov (2005); Gasprinskii (1985[1881]).
- 35 Geraci (2001).
- 36 Gasprinskii (1985[1881]; Amirxanov (2005: 49).
- 37 Gasprinskii (1985[1881]: 71) on literacy among Muslims. Heller and Nekrich (1986: 174) state that literacy among all Russians was 7% in 1855 and rose to 23% by 1897. Brooks (1985: 4) claims that overall literacy in the Russian Empire in 1897 was 21%. Since neither of these sources explicitly accounts for non-Russian imperial subjects, parsing the information they contain presents some difficulty.
- 38 Amirxanov (2005: 140, 51).
- 39 Amirxanov (2005: 140).
- 40 Amirxanov (2005: 120).
- 41 Amirxanov (2005: 135–136); Iskhakov (2005: 88).
- 42 Amirxanov (2005).
- 43 Iskhakov (2005). As a result, Tatars lacked knowledge of what was occurring in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War, even though Tatar soldiers were fighting in it.
- 44 Iskhakov (2005: 99).
- 45 Amirxanov (2005: 52).
- 46 Iskhakov (2005: 95).
- 47 Amirxanov (2005: 114).
- 48 Amirxanov (2005: 139; 141–142).
- 49 Amirxanov (2005: 128).
- 50 Iskhakov (2005: 97).
- 51 The most notable of the jadid dramatists, Gayaz Isxaki (1878–1954), may rank among the best playwrights in the world. Isxaki, who fled to China after the Bolshevik revolution, eventually dying in Turkey, was a Socialist Revolutionary frequently arrested by the Russian government.
- 52 Amirxanov (2005: 117).

- 53 Amirxanov (2005: 132–133).
- 54 Amirxanov (2005: 135).
- 55 Valeev et al. (1981).
- 56 Geraci (2001); Khasanov (1977: 219–220).
- 57 *Istoriia roda Apanaevykh*; Fuks (1991[1844]).
- 58 The relative level of emancipation of a “nationality’s women” is supposed to indicate its level of revolutionary consciousness. As Massell (1974) points out, in Central Asia women were considered a surrogate proletariat. The Soviet authorities assumed that Muslims hadn’t yet advanced far enough to have classes and hence class struggle, since they were considered to be pre-industrial. But even the volume by Valeev et al. (1981) demonstrates that there were Tatar factory owners, workers, and revolutionary activists at the turn of the 20th century.
- 59 Institut slavianovedeniia (1960); Sharadzenidze (1980).
- 60 Iskhakov (2005: 101).
- 61 Slezkine (1994b: 134n, 284) and Zakiev (1991), respectively.
- 62 Ginzburg (1967).
- 63 Keller (2001), inter alii.
- 64 See inter alia Fitzpatrick (1994, 1999, 2003, 2006), Heller and Nekrich (1986), and Medvedev (1989).
- 65 Khujin and Sitdikov (1996, 2005) indicate that while some Tatars consumed wine, they weren’t known to drink vodka.
- 66 There is also the example of a video kiosk window display I saw on Kazan’s Tatarstan Street in 2000, which featured five best picks—all trashy, new-release American movies—and a banner which read, in Russian, “What to watch and who to drink with? We’ve solved the first problem for you.”
- 67 For more on Russian drinking practices, see Christian (1990), Erofeev (1977), Pesmen (2000a), Paxson (2005), and Ries (1997).
- 68 A *hadji* is a Muslim who has fulfilled the fifth pillar of Islam by making the annual pilgrimage to the sacred cities of Mecca and Madina.
- 69 Her exact words were, “*Tatar kzy pärtärdä utyrmi.*”
- 70 Slezkine (1994a: 443).
- 71 By 1958–1959, in the Russian Republic, full 10-year schooling in the native language was offered in only three languages: Russian, Tatar, and Bashkir (Silver 1974b).
- 72 Kreindler (1989: 49). Statistics regarding what percentage of children studied in national schools versus Russian-language schools were not collected during the Soviet period. (See Kirkwood 1991). Rather, the focus was on the numbers of non-Russian children who were acquiring fluency in Russian language (see Anderson and Silver 1990; Kreindler 1992; Silver 1978, among others).
- 73 Kreindler (1989: 51; 54).
- 74 Interview at the offices of the Permanent Representative of Tatarstan to St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg, 31 July 2001.
- 75 Silver (1974c). Staklis (2006) explains that the language of instruction was another significant source of regional variation at all levels of education.
- 76 Valeev et al. (1981: 68).
- 77 Children also study at least one foreign language, most popularly English.
- 78 Dolgov (2009).

- 79 When I asked government officials at the Tatarstan Ministry of Education about the school closings in 2006, they wouldn't reply to my questions, saying only that some Tatar schools were being closed in depopulated villages for economic reasons. The data regarding the 111 closed schools originates with the Tatar Social Center.
- 80 Devlet (2009).
- 81 When I was doing research in Kazan in the late 1990s, as soon as people found out I was studying Tatar culture, most exclaimed that I needed to go to a village if I wanted to learn about authentic Tatariness.
- 82 "Particular" with regards to Slezkine's (1994a) formulation.
- 83 See Carrère-d'Encausse (1989) on the Bolsheviks' invitation to Tatar jadids to join the Party. See Batulla and Kamaliev (2003); Conquest (1990); Rorlich (1986: 126) on the Soviet secret police's persecution of Tatar cultural figures.
- 84 Ginzburg (1967).
- 85 Akchurin et al. (2006).
- 86 Martin (2001).
- 87 See Sultan-Galiev (1984)[1921], "*Metody antireligioznoj propagandy sredi musul'man.*"
- 88 Turan is one of two ideological divisions of Eurasian peoples found in Pan-Turkism, the other being Iran. Sultan-Galiev (1984[1919]: 9–10).
- 89 Like the Kronstadt sailors Trotsky had massacred in 1921, Sultan-Galiev was more revolutionary than the revolutionaries in power. See Heller and Nekrich (1986).
- 90 Sultan-Galiev (1984[1919]: 17–18).
- 91 Sultan-Galiev (1984[1919]: 19, 22).
- 92 Sultan-Galiev (1984[1921]: 40).
- 93 Yakupova (2000: 175).
- 94 Nadezhda Mandelstam writes about this in her riveting memoir, *Hope Against Hope* (1970).
- 95 Rorlich (1986). Socialist Revolutionaries were purged for having opposed some early Bolshevik policies.
- 96 Unfortunately, I couldn't find Iliuziia *xanyim*'s relatives said to be living in the US.
- 97 That is, the father probably denounced other people to save his own skin. See Conquest (1990) for evidence of this trend.
- 98 Yakupova (2000: 14–15).
- 99 Poliakov (1992).
- 100 Woolard (1989) describes a similar kind of conservatism among Castilian-speakers in Catalonia who do not wish to give up their Castilian-speaking social networks of familiars for the sake of exploring Catalan-speaking networks of strangers. In the Ferghana Valley, by contrast, traditionalism became a mode of modernity (Liu 2002).
- 101 See Brubaker (1996).
- 102 Slezkine (1994b: 309).
- 103 The Karelo-Finnish Republic, later downgraded to the status of an autonomous republic, was number 16.
- 104 See <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/05/69f48503-828d-452d-88db-a5ee3e437d33.html>
- 105 Alexandrova (1984: 50, 39).
- 106 Faller (1995).

- 107 Attwood (1993) and Faller (n.d.). On January 17, 1922 Lenin signed a decree nationalizing Soviet cinema for he felt that it was the most important art for propagandizing (Davies 1996: 918).
- 108 Egorov and Naumova (2005).
- 109 See Attwood (1993) and Mamonova (1989) for more on women in Soviet cinema.
- 110 For comparable illustrations with regards to other Soviet nationalities, see Lemon (2002) and Slezkine (1994a).
- 111 This is similar to how minority performances are perceived in neighboring China. See Gladney (1998), Litzinger (2000), and Schein (2001). Early Tatar theatre featured sophisticated, politically engaging plays spanning a variety of dramatic genres, such as those written by the masterful playwright Gayaz Isxaki.
- 112 See Lemon (2000) for similar attitudes among Russians towards Roma theater.
- 113 During a Turkic theater festival I attended at the Kamal Theater in 1998, translations were made into other languages—from Turkish to Tatar and vice versa, for example.
- 114 Gross (1992).
- 115 Pesmen (2000a) states that many Russian Siberians were relearning farming techniques in the 1990s and my own interviews indicate that dacha acquisition has increased dramatically over the past 15 years.
- 116 *Tugan avyl* or *tugan yak* in Tatar.
- 117 Some non-Tatars likewise make visits to villages for celebrations of holidays like Sabantuy, but they visit the villages of Tatar friends and relatives, not “their own” villages.
- 118 To return is “*kait-*” and “*vozvrashchat’sia*,” while to go is “*bar-*” and “*poekhat’* or “*s’ezdit’*” in Tatar and Russian, respectively.
- 119 Or from *sovkhozes*, that is, “state farms.” But, since people in Tatarstan don’t talk about *sovkhozes*, I don’t use the term. Pesmen (2000a) states that all the people she knew during research in the Siberian city of Omsk had parents in the countryside.
- 120 These institutions are elsewhere referred to as the “linguistic marketplace.” See Bourdieu (1991), Gal (1989), and Irvine (1989).
- 121 For more on how linguistic differences can come to indicate cultural ones, see Schiefflin, Woolard, and Kroskrity, eds. (1998) and Silverstein (1996), inter alia.
- 122 My thanks to two junior Tatar historians, Nail Garipov and Aidar Khabutdinov, for helping me to understand this phenomenon.
- 123 Yakupova (2000: 18).
- 124 Over lunch one day at the elite English school, the head Tatar teacher asked me if the parents of my Turkish fiancé liked it when I spoke Turkish with them. Because there was no other answer to give, I said “Yes.” She continued, “Yes, because that means that you recognize the legitimacy of their culture. When a person speaks to you in your language, it means he respects your culture.”
- 125 Plokhly (2006).
- 126 Beissinger (1996) seems to argue that post-Soviet nation-builders were disingenuous Communist opportunists attempting to maintain their power and authority.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT TATARSTAN LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (1990–1993) REVEAL ABOUT THE UNMAKING OF SOVIET PEOPLE

“In a word, the people voiced their opinion quite strongly in the referendum. Let us not give in to those who have sold their souls, to chauvinists or to adventurers!”

Letter to the Editor, *Vatanyň Tatarstan: Alai tügel, bolai ul*, April 28, 1993, page 2.

These lines, from a letter to the editor written by a Tatar living in Moscow and published in Tatarstan’s Tatar-language former Communist Party newspaper, reveal a passion for Tatarstan sovereignty during its heyday in the early 1990s that the newspapers’ editors and Tatarstan government officials wished to have circulated among readers. Prior to glasnost and perestroika the Tatar- and Russian-language press in Tatarstan was effectively one. Indeed, Tatar-language articles were often translations of pieces published in the Russian-language press. However, by 1990—the year Tatarstan declared sovereignty—Tatar-language letters to the editor evoked an imagined political order based upon a particularly Tatar discursive world. Certainly, differences between Tatar and Russian discursive worlds didn’t suddenly spring into existence in the late 1980s. Tatar-speakers and Russian-speakers constituted different, if overlapping, speech communities prior to the social and political turmoil caused by Mikhail Gorbachev’s attempted reforms. But, by and large, people in Tatarstan and other regions of the Soviet Union shared, or at least thought they shared, discourse in common.

Perestroika had negligible political impact.¹ However, glasnost—which means “openness”—profoundly affected Soviet order. By encouraging ordinary people to suggest improvements to the Soviet system and to air their dissatisfactions, glasnost opened floodgates of complaint, which—once unleashed—became unstoppable. These complaints often concerned environmental degradation, public health, Stalin-period repression, religious freedom, and the status of the Soviet Union’s hundreds of recognized national languages and cultures. Tatars in Tatarstan complained of the impending death of Tatar language, the sorry state of Tatar

national culture, and the need to revive Islam. They also took concrete steps to change society. Among other things, these changes resulted in the creation of a new Tatar public sphere that has acted as a catalyst for its own growth, development, and differentiation in ways that could not have been predicted at the outset. The sum of these developments gave rise to an accelerated differentiation in the discursive worlds produced by Tatarstan's speech communities, which resulted in the splitting of a single, albeit ethnically diverse, Soviet people into multiple publics. While sovereignty did not endure as a mass movement, many thoughts expressed during those critical years of relative freedom continue to undergird life in Tatarstan.

The letters analyzed in this chapter were published in the early 1990s in Tatarstan's two Communist Party organ newspapers, *Vatanyñ Tatarstan* and *Respublika Tatarstan*, as they came to be called shortly after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, printed in Tatar and Russian, respectively.² While letters to the editor can't act as an unmediated barometer of public opinion, they may open the door to understanding what kinds of ideas are floating around in a disjointed and variegated public sphere. Because these letters appeared in Communist Party organ newspapers, the range of this public sphere was constrained by what the political establishment considered fit to print.³ Without a doubt, the letters served government interests by legitimating the existence of certain kinds of public opinion, and perhaps even brought those opinions into existence through presenting readers with ideas they may not have previously encountered.⁴

Though institutionally equivalent and housed in the same building, the two newspapers do not appeal to equivalent readerships—the Russian-language one tends to be urban, while the Tatar-language readership is predominantly rural. Reflecting a common Soviet division of language domains, during late socialism Tatarstan's capital city, Kazan, was almost exclusively Russophone, while Tatar language survived in small cities and villages.⁵ The locations from which writers sent their letters to the two newspapers' editors reflect this division.⁶ Additionally, both newspapers served, albeit in unequal measure, as beacons from the homeland for Tatars living beyond Tatarstan's borders.⁷ Both newspapers continued to act as government organs into the 21st century—each has a fax machine in its office where directives arrive from the office of the Tatarstan president. This means, among other things, that the papers' employees depend upon the Tatarstan government for both their salaries and apartments.

In 2000, the daily circulation of *Vatanyim Tatarstan* (52,000) exceeded that of *Respublika Tatarstan* (40,000), while in 2009 their respective subscription rates had dropped *Vatanyim Tatarstan* (37,000) and *Respublika Tatarstan* (36,000). Even at the height of sovereignty's persuasive power, there were only a few newsstands in Kazan that carried Tatar-language newspapers and periodicals. By the beginning of the 21st century, the majority of Tatar-language publications circulated via subscription with hardly any available for purchase from Kazan street vendors.

Because Tatars generally expressed excitement when they discovered I was researching their culture, it was easy to obtain an interview with *Vatanyim Tatarstan*'s Chief Editor in 2000, Gabdulxak Shamsutdinov.⁸ Shamsutdinov explained that the official ideologies of the two newspapers' editorial offices' are identical—the only difference is that since Tatarness is identified with Islam, *Vatanyim Tatarstan* has a duty to address the question of religion. Accordingly, the newspaper has a special department on religious matters, an Orthodox Christian equivalent to which does not exist at *Respublika Tatarstan*.

Shamsutdinov stressed that *Vatanyim Tatarstan* has a responsibility to serve as a link between the Tatarstan government and the people. The government learns about the people's concerns through the letters sent in to the paper and the people learn the government's responses through reading *Vatanyim Tatarstan*. At the time we spoke, the Tatar newspaper received more than 22,000 letters to the editor each year. Even though there was not room enough to print them all, Shamsutdinov claimed to address 80% of them in some form. He said that the only letters the paper would not print were calls to war or those that could potentially rouse feelings of national hatred.

Of course, there is an important difference between the significance of letters to the editor in the early nineties and those arriving at the newspaper when I interviewed Shamsutdinov. In the early nineties, it seemed to Russia's residents as if anything could happen. It was a period of unimaginable transitions: Tatarstan's Declaration of Sovereignty (1990), the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), and the popular referendum upholding Tatarstan Sovereignty (1992). People sending letters to newspapers during glasnost could not predict what consequences their complaints, queries, and suggestions might have.

By contrast, in 2000, when I met with Shamsutdinov, people in Tatarstan had become cynical about politics. Some saw Tatarstan President Mintimir Shaimiev's signing of a power-sharing treaty with Moscow in 1994 as a capitulation to stagnation. Others cited the ruble's collapse in

1997 as the death knell to hope for progressive social and political change. Many admitted to voting for Vladimir Putin, even though they considered him a dangerous Russian nationalist, because they believed he would restore economic order to the country.

In studying these letters, I originally sought to discover whether the possibility for political change compelled people to write in to the newspapers or if their concerns were mundane, even during this period, and what kinds of attitudes the editors were making known to the reading public. However, the letters revealed a fundamental lack of equivalence in the worldviews expressed in each language, documenting the split of Tatarstan's two main speech communities into incomparable discursive worlds. The asymmetric distribution of linguistic repertoires in Tatarstan described in the Introduction means that Tatar-speakers are generally bilingual and Russian-speakers are not. Consequently, Tatar-speakers can and do consume media products in Russian, while the converse is not generally true. The Tatar-language letters constitute a sphere of discourse incomprehensible to people monolingual in Russian, since they cannot read Tatar, which is unrecognizable to them as part of lived experience. However, the Tatar-language letters don't constitute a form of resistance to Russian dominance—the Tatar newspaper is a government organ.⁹ Rather, the newspapers' dualism suggests unevenly applied Tatarstan government policies to mollify Tatarstan's Tatar and Russian speech communities by allowing them to observe their own separate conventions.

The letter's demands fall along a continuum of scale from the mundane to the political to the ideological. Mundane demands concern small-scale problems within the existing system that require fixing. Political demands seek modifications to the existing system, while ideological demands appeal to alternative systems of values for social organization not recognized as existing at the time they were written. Letters to the editor published in the Russian-language newspaper generally proposed that the system be fixed, that is, their demands were political. Those printed in the Tatar-language newspaper often focused upon the mundane, or made ideological appeals to non-extant systems of values—sometimes doing both simultaneously. In the Russian-language newspaper, writers debated the validity of Tatarstan sovereignty and the political movement for national rights taking place within the republic and throughout the former Soviet Union. In the Tatar-language newspaper, there is no such debate. Rather, letters contain complaints about the Russian chauvinist bias of Tatarstan politicians and praise for those who are considered to show adequate concern for the plight of Tatar language, culture, and political autonomy.

In addition to examining the scale of the demands made in the letters, certain heuristically generated questions guided my analysis: (1) How do letter writers legitimate their demands as somehow representative of other people? (2) Where do writers place the borders of the polity they inhabit? Are their imaginings geographically nested and whom do they include? (3) At what point in time do writers' envision their golden age. (Pre-conquest—before 1552? Stalinism—1924–1953? In the foreseeable future?) (4) By the same token, what are the ingredients to writers' nightmare scenarios, that is, what has to happen for things to fall apart?

Laminated Authorship

Because Russian has been the official language of communication among the Soviet Union's various nations since 1938, Tatars and other non-Russians send letters they want read by a mixed audience to the Russian-language newspaper. Tatar-speakers may choose to write to the Russian-language newspaper to make their views known to a wide audience or simply because many bilingual Tatars listen to Tatar radio, but read Russian newspapers.¹⁰ Since it is the post-Soviet division into "Tatars" and "non-Tatars" that drives the narrative of this book, and more importantly, the lives of people living in Tatarstan, it is important to pinpoint indicators of "Tatarness" in the letters. Among these I count Muslim surnames in signatures, self-identification as Tatar, writing about Islam or Tatar cultural practices from an insider perspective, representations on behalf of "the Tatar people," and linguistic signals—the insertion of Tatar words or signs of Tatar grammatical interference in Russian texts.¹¹ Voices emerging from a Tatar discursive world may thus make their presence felt in letters printed in the Russian language.

Another influence on authorship is editorial framing. Letters may be modified or censored completely. They may be edited in ways that alter their original thrust. Or writing presented as a letter, which we presume to come from an ordinary citizen, may in fact turn out to be an article. For example, a piece printed in *Respublika Tatarstan* called "'Marked' ballots?" has the words "Letter to the editor" printed above the headline. However, it turns out to be an editorial from a Mr. Kamalov, a former candidate for Tatarstan's Parliament who suggests that voter fraud occurred in the election he lost.¹² Similarly, an announcement from a famous pop music star about the cancellation of an upcoming concert and another stating that courses for government bureaucrats to raise their qualifications are open

for registration are presented as letters to the editor.¹³ The appearance of such “letters” serves as a reminder that the public created through publishing newspapers is not an undifferentiated mass of equals.¹⁴

In addition to editing, the newspaper editors frame how we read letters with introductions to particular topics. For example, one introduction states that all letters received about the military draft protest the practice of sons performing their service far away from home.¹⁵ In another, the editors point out that “the letters ‘for’ and ‘against’ almost without fail are divided according to the national identity of their authors...”¹⁶ Since we cannot view all the letters sent to the newspaper (or even be certain that those published have not been significantly modified) we can only take the editors’ word that nationality serves as the most significant factor in making certain kinds of demands.¹⁷

Indeed, letters to the editor are created through a kind of laminated authorship, some aspects of which are apparent, but most of which are not.¹⁸ In addition to editorial modification or censoring, laminations may include aid in writing or suggestions for phrasing by letter-writers’ household members or friends. Or they may be internal, since people’s voices are always heteroglossic, that is, they contain ideas and snippets of speech originally expressed by other people.¹⁹ This means that the letters are social products not only because they circulate publicly, but also because multiple actors produce them.²⁰

Legitimizing Representation

Writers of the letters analyzed here presented their claims as popular or representative of other people using four specific legitimization devices: they invoked their Soviet-period status; they used statements made by Soviet human rights activist (and later Soviet Duma deputy) Andrei Sakharov; they claimed long-term residence in Tatarstan; and they employed kin terms to rein in opponents.

Writers invoking their Soviet-period status used the device differently in the two newspapers. In the Russian-language newspaper *Respublika Tatarstan* writers protesting the shift in political power towards Kazan and away from Moscow frequently augmented their signatures with Soviet titles—Member of the Communist Party, Pensioner, Worker, Participant in the Great Patriotic War (as ex-Soviets call World War II), Labor Veteran, or Invalid (that is, Handicapped).²¹ By contrast, writers supporting change often legitimated their perspective by naming their professional

occupations. This may be because people challenging the Soviet system do not want to identify themselves by the titles it conferred.²² This contrast generally seems to mirror writers' nationality, that is, non-Tatars appear to cling to their Soviet-period status, while Tatars sometimes name their current occupations.²³ For the most part, however, Tatar-language writers do not employ occupation and Soviet-era status in their signature lines. Rather, in the letters themselves, they identify themselves by place of origin or residence, which is how they identify themselves in daily life.²⁴

The second way writers to *Respublika Tatarstan* in the early 1990s legitimated their stances, regardless of nationality, was to employ the ideas of Soviet nuclear physicist and human rights activist Andrei Sakharov. Sakharov's name appears in two letters published between Tatarstan's declaration of sovereignty in 1990 and the popular referendum on sovereignty in 1992. One letter citing Sakharov reads as follows:

We consider the Republic of Tatarstan to have powerful economic potential and the right to place itself alongside the other union republics. To us, her inhabitants, the time has come to feel like citizens with the full rights of an equal sovereign republic. Is not Academic A. D. Sakharov correct in repeating again and again that the union republics, autonomous republics, and autonomous regions should receive identical status and that that would eradicate not only existing, but also future, conflictual situations on inter-national soil?²⁵

The letter is signed by eight people whose surnames suggest that they belong to three different nationalities—Tatar, Russian, and Jewish.²⁶ A second letter that cites Sakharov's ideas is authored by a man named Kharitonov, who identifies himself as a lawyer:

Academic Sakharov wanted to write into the Constitution of the USSR the right of each people, great or small, to equal rights and independence. I thought at that time that our life was taking a direct step towards democracy, that his idea was understood here by everyone. It turns out that is not the case.... At present we continue to give almost everything to the Center.²⁷

These two letters to the Russian-language newspaper use Sakharov's ideas to legitimate their own political demands in equivalent ways. By contrast, writers to the Tatar-language newspaper do not incorporate politicians' words into their letters to substantiate their own points of view. Instead, when Tatar-writers mention politicians, they praise or chastise them.²⁸

Thirdly, writers legitimate their opinions by claiming long-term residence in Tatarstan, which they measure differently depending upon the

language in which they write. For instance, a letter to the Russian-language *Respublika Tatarstan* whose author signs his name A. Chërnykh, Elabuga City, begins as follows:

You probably will not print my letter, since, even as it is, [the political organization] TOTs accuses you of ‘anti-Tatar politics.’²⁹ But the voice of Russians should also be heard in your newspaper. When you read about those meetings and declarations, you become beside yourself. And what if our city and region have always been Russian? Our grandfathers and great grandfathers built them. But we have never spoken of that anywhere until now. In general, we have not shouted out that we are, after all, Russians and someone else had better ‘get out!’ Let us recall that we all have always been friendly and helped each other. Even during the War, when each piece of bread was reckoned. Now in our city among the leadership you find few Russians. Even Russian doctors and salesclerks have become rare. How much further is there? Where is there for us to go? These thoughts have only started to come into my head recently. Before, when we were in school, no one asked what your nationality was.³⁰

Chërnykh’s letter is ethnically focused and confrontational. It is also firmly and explicitly grounded in the political. In contradistinction to his letter’s tone and political focus, a letter in the Tatar-language paper *Vatanyrm Tatarstan* from a Nurgayaz Tahirov contains deep-seated ideological implications. Tahirov informs readers that a mosque has been built in his village, which

had eight mǎxállās [Muslim parishes] and eight mosques before the 1917 revolution. But, the Communist regime did not allow a single one of them to remain....At last, after 75 years the light of faith [*iman nury*] is returning to our native village. Inshallah, on the land where the light of faith exists, both goodness and honest living will surface because our ancient Bolgar grandfathers lived in this way.³¹

On the one hand, being able to pray in a mosque is mundane—part of the everyday practice of Islam. On the other, practicing Islam is an ideological act because Soviet atheism disallowed alternative belief systems. Tahirov’s invocation of Bolgar—the archaeological site where some ancestors to present-day Tatars lived from at least the 10th through the 13th centuries—is likewise ideological since its inhabitation predates not just the Soviet Union, but Russia’s existence as a state. What is not apparent from the letter’s text is its political significance. Because Tatars believe that religiosity bestows people with a moral conscience and discourages inhumane behavior, the Tatarstan government developed plans to increase the number of houses of worship. Tahirov indicates his place in these plans in his signature line, as “Mosque Charity Director.”³² Thus, like Kamalov cited above, Tahirov has a particular vested interest in the topic about which he writes.

Tahirov's letter, moreover, reveals the subtlety of a Tatar rhetorical tactic. This tactic is one in which the speaker implies criticism by employing the subjunctive mood to expound upon the positive virtues of a situation. Though blaming the Communist regime, which no longer exists, for the disappearance of mosques in his native village, Tahirov focuses on the potential for "goodness" and "honest living" that the light of faith (*iman nury*) should cause to emerge, and avoids deriding Russians. This tactic complies with the Tatar ideological belief in maintaining peaceful dialogue at all costs. Tatar speech conventions strongly discourage losing one's temper in the presence of those who have offended you or even finger-pointing in their absence. For example, when Tatars living in Kazan described to me how Russians had harassed them for speaking Tatar in public, they often referred to them obliquely as "people of another nation."³³

These two letters clearly reflect different sets of social values. The Russian letter gives voice to imperialist thinking in which "always" extends back three generations, as compared to the Tatar "has been" of ten centuries. Unlike Russians, in 1992 Tatars were not in a position to suffer from the historical shortsightedness of imperialism. That is, like all colonized peoples, Tatars received constant reminders of their social and historical positions within the dominant society in ways which Russians, as members of the hegemonic group, still have no need to recognize. Consequently, Chërnykh has the freedom to think that the place from which he writes did not exist in any meaningful way before his Russian great-grandfathers settled it.

Evidence that Tatars and Russians measure historical memory differently comes from ethnographic evidence as well. For example, my Russian landlady Alevtina, sounding like Chërnykh, blamed Tatar "nationalists" for what she perceived as the emergence of "nasty" behavior among Tatars. As evidence of nationalists' interference, she avowed, "We always lived well together." But Alevtina's "always" only extended back as far as the memories she had accumulated during her lifetime of some 50 years. In contrast to her historical memory, stands the oral family history of one Tatar man I knew who has since died—he was 86 in 2000—which spanned nearly 500 years to before Ivan the Terrible's conquest.³⁴

Despite their ethos of peace, Tatars do express anger towards people who have offended them, especially in Russian. Employing kin terms three Tatar writers to *Respublika Tatarstan* illustrate one way anger finds expression. The writers seek to deride a certain Valeev, a fellow Tatar who published an article critical of Tatarstan sovereignty supporters. One

Tatar-dominant writer refers to the offender and his “unpatriotic brothers.”³⁵ In a second letter, a self-identified Tatar derides Valeev for frightening his “fellow tribesmen” by intimating that the end result of “disobedience” could be “much more sorrowful than the results of 1552.”³⁶ A third letter writer addresses the offender Valeev throughout using the informal you, *ty*, because, as he explains, “I think that I am older than you. In order to be addressed as “*vy*” you have to merit it through service to the people.”³⁷ The same writer dubs Valeev a Tatar without lineage or tribe.

While these insults took place in Russian, they are predicated on Tatar cultural conventions. As my informants pointed out in numerous interviews, kin relations are more important among Tatar-speakers than among Russian-speakers because Tatars maintain their national language and consequently their sense of national identity largely through family ties to native villages. Kin ties are indicated by forms of address, which younger people employ to demonstrate the respect due their elders, whether related by blood or not. In Kazan’s urban setting, often far away from their blood relatives, Tatar-speakers nevertheless use kin terms and thereby stress the importance of their social networks. Thus, the Tatar children I spent time with at various schools called their ethnically Russian teachers by first name and patronymic, while they called their Tatar teachers “Auntie So-and-So” or, in Tatar, So-and-So *apa*.³⁸ And Tatarstan Tatars refer to President Mintimir Shaimiev as *Babai*, which means “Grandfather.” According to this system of values, refusing a Tatar lineage is a profound insult with an impact generally unfelt in Russian speech. It denies that person a place in society.³⁹

The devices letter-writers employed to legitimate their voices as representative differ depending both upon the language in which they write and the attitudes they express towards Tatarstan sovereignty. Writers to the Russian-language newspaper often invoked formal Soviet institutions—their Soviet-period status or Soviet politicians—while writers to the Tatar one did not. Indeed, letters by Tatar writers to both publications, even in Russian, tend to rely on Tatar cultural institutions.

Plastic Politics

While Russians will refer nostalgically to their homeland when they are outside the former Soviet Union, even Tatars living within Tatarstan’s borders may speak longingly of their birthplaces.⁴⁰ However, in the letters to the editor, nearly all references to homeland, either directly or implic-

itly by reference to foreignness, occur in *Vatanyım Tatarstan* and draw the borders of that homeland around the territory of Tatarstan.

Defining Tatarstan as the homeland has the effect of projecting the republic's political authority as that of a sovereign state. A remarkable occurrence of this takes place in a cluster of letters in *Vatanyım Tatarstan* concerning military service, which Tatars tend to oppose because their sons, as both members of a national minority and Muslims, are subject to particularly vicious hazing. The letters' authors presume that Tatarstan's declaration of sovereignty in 1990 imbues it with authority over Tatars drafted into the Russian army. In these letters, printed under the title, "If we don't protect them, who will?" (*Bez yaklamasak, kem yaklar?*), several mothers of soldiers complain that their sons have to perform their military service in foreign regions and republics. One mother demands that the republic return her child to his birthplace. In addition to letters from soldiers' mothers, *Vatanyım Tatarstan* printed one from a soldier serving in Siberia. Alluding to the hazing taking place in his military company, the soldier requests, "Now that our republic is a sovereign government, I would like to finish my tour of duty in my homeland."⁴¹

Demonstrating similarly imagined borders, though providing evidence that they may not be newly so, is a letter from a woman living in Uzbekistan. Complaining of the prohibitory inflation in *Vatanyım Tatarstan*'s price, she writes, "Although I live abroad, I have subscribed to *Vatanyım Tatarstan* for many years. Every time I take the paper in my hand, I become happy, as if I were returning to my native country."⁴² Her letter suggests that, even if Tatarstan's Sovereignty Declaration increases Tatarstan's political authority, Tatar imaginings of Central Asia as "abroad" may predate glasnost. However, because Tatars who read standard Kazan Tatar live fairly densely in the regions surrounding Tatarstan, whether or not the writer considers her native country to be Tatarstan *per se* is unclear.⁴³

Other letters suggest that less permeable borders divide foreign lands from native ones. One man writes from the Tatarstan city of Zelenodol'sk, just outside Kazan, complaining that people coming from foreign regions—namely the neighboring republics of Chuvashia, Udmurtia, and Kirov oblast—buy up "our wealth" of food stuffs "in broad daylight" and take them away.⁴⁴ This hoarding for the homeland motif appears in other letters as well, which, while similarly fixing the borders of homeland at Tatarstan's borders, imply different locations for abroad. The writer of a letter printed on the same page as the one from Zelenodol'sk marvels that the head of the Ulyanovsk Delegation to the All-World Tatar Congress is

a man with a Tatar soul, even though he grew up in a “foreign place”—the Republic of Georgia—and only came to Tatarstan for the first time as a young adult.⁴⁵

Some writers who support sovereignty seem to situate abroad in Moscow, the seat of the Soviet Union’s and subsequently Russia’s centralized government. For example, a Tatar woman writing from the small Tatarstan city of Älmät laments the Soviet past and protests, “throughout our life the wealth we acquire has been taken from our very mouths,” referring to Moscow’s practice of forcibly appropriating crops and oil, in which donor regions, like Tatarstan, lose out.⁴⁶ Likewise voicing this view and demonstrating the real-life messiness of relationships between language communities and political opinion, the lawyer Kharitonov advocates, in Russian, that the people of Tatarstan should vote ‘yes’ in Tatarstan’s referendum, in part, so that Tatarstan can retain its wealth and govern itself effectively.⁴⁷ Thus, while the letters about military service and the one from the woman in Uzbekistan may not fix the border between homeland and elsewhere concretely at the edges of Tatarstan, these latter letters do.⁴⁸

The majority of people with Tatar surnames who sent letters to the Russian-language newspaper, *Respublika Tatarstan*, seem to imagine Russia or the Soviet Union as their “country.” The one exception in the sample is a letter written by a Tatar woman, who has been living “outside the borders of Tatarstan” since 1953, who writes in support of Tatarstan sovereignty.⁴⁹

The relationship between writers’ place of origin and where they fix the borders of the polity is not necessarily predictable. That is, even Tatarspeakers writing in Tatar may describe the polities they inhabit in what appears to be an ideologically contradictory manner. For example, the woman from Älmät juxtaposes the Tatar terms for country (*il*)—usually the Soviet Union—and homeland (*tugan jir*)—usually one’s native village—thus. “For the sake of our country (*il*) and our land, 20 million people perished in the Great Patriotic War. But, we do not know the value of our homeland (*tugan jir*), we sell it.” In the context of her letter, it remains unclear whether or not *il* and *tugan jir* refer to the same territory.⁵⁰

This lack of clarity reflects the general political confusion that held sway in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, there appears to be a tendency for Tatar-writers residing in Tatarstan to fix the borders of the polity around Tatarstan and to include other Tatarspeakers in that polity.⁵¹ Tatars living outside Tatarstan may imagine the homeland to be Tatarstan, while the larger polity they imagined themselves inhabiting, the Soviet Union, may

no longer exist. Like Russian-oriented writers, those external Tatars may find themselves occupying a liminal state in which it is uncertain what their country is.

Golden Ages

Tatar-language writers tended to make concrete demands for an improved future. By contrast, a number of Russian-language writers professed nostalgia for the golden age of Joseph Stalin's rule (1924–1953). This emerges as part of a larger Soviet debate about the Stalin period spurred by Georgian director Tengiz Abuladze's allegorical film *Repentance* (1987) and subsequent discussions in the press that increasingly drove people into camps of opponents and supporters of Stalin's actions.

An illuminating exchange revealing the radical difference in how ex-Soviets remember lived history takes place in a two-page spread in a weekend edition of *Respublika Tatarstan* called "The history of the Republic in the fates of individual people: Turning the pages of history."⁵² The letters in the spread are reactions to an article by someone with the identifiably Tatar surname Zinnatullin, who, the writers imply, wrote in praise of the quality of village life during the 1930s and 1940s.⁵³ According to these letters, self-identified Tatars and people with Tatar surnames are more likely to assert a negative view of Stalinism, while those with Russian surnames tend to represent it in a positive light.

The most moving indictment of Stalinism among these letters comes from a woman with a Tatar surname who grew up in a village in Bashkortostan. The woman describes in lurid detail the starvation and deaths that resulted from forcible food requisitioning, abject poverty, and the political terror of the late 1930s. She explains that after World War II, while serving in the army, she was sent to work as a prison camp guard. There, along with men who had had the misfortune to be German POWs and were consequently condemned as traitors to the USSR, she encountered female prisoners incarcerated for having been sexually enslaved by the Nazis. If pregnant, the women were forced to have abortions or, if their babies had already been born, to give them up. Many committed suicide.

A man with a Tatar surname, who notes that he is a member of the People's Front of Tatarstan, likewise expressed pity for innocent Gulag victims. He argued that adapting to one's surroundings, in this case Zinnatullin's ability to be happy living under Stalin, is a necessary survival

mechanism. However, he considered it “wonderful that the time has come when every person can be thoughtful, for pluralism should become the norm for our life from now on.”⁵⁴

Unlike the views expressed above, letters from people with Russian or Ukrainian surnames often depict the 1930s–1940s with warm nostalgia. For example, in stark contrast to all the other letters in the series, one Russian old-age pensioner, who grew up on a collective farm or *kolkhoz*, shared her fond memories of the Stalinist period, when, she claims, she and her family never went hungry.⁵⁵ A Ukrainian writer likewise makes an assertion that contradicts testimonials from other sources—he maintains that he went to school in Kazan with the children of enemies of the people, whom, he insists, were never reproached for their status. Echoing Soviet rhetoric, other apparent Russians blame the relatives of people purged by the secret police or *kulaks* (“rich” peasants) for sabotage, which they claim caused the famines during collectivization in the 1920s.

There are, nevertheless, significant exceptions to the tendency for opinions about Stalin to split along ethnic lines. Not all “Russians” express admiration for Stalin, nor do all “Tatars” loathe his policies. For instance, one writer with the Russian surname Tsetkov, whose letter describes a childhood haunted by starvation and death, begins his letter with a memory of a Stalin-period nighttime police search, remarking, “...at home we no longer had firewood nor bread left. We were burning the chairs in the stove. One of the nocturnal ‘guests,’ all dressed in leather, sat on the table swinging his leg. A second one, already on his way out, slammed the door...” Correspondingly, a writer with the Tatar surname Nizamov states that Stalin ought only to be blamed for specific actions and that the heroic feats of the period should also be taken into account. Nizamov threatens his fellow-readers with a kind of retroactive subjunctive nightmare, warning that, if it had not been for Stalin, “we” would now be ruled by German barons.

The letters likewise demonstrate that fondness for the past does not preclude present-day hope. A self-identified Russian, who explains that he is married to a Tatar, writes, “From early childhood we did not know any national differences whatsoever. The common language was Russian. And all of us—Tatars, Russians, Chuvashes, and Jews—lived amicably and happily.”⁵⁶ At the same time, the writer considers perestroika a positive thing—“honest labor,” as he calls it.⁵⁷

The opinions presented in these letters, in particular the lack of a tidy fit between attitudes about Stalin and self-identified or evident nationality, echo the kinds of opinions people express in Russian in other Tatarstan

environments. Tatars do not share a general consensus that the Soviet state was an ethnic Russian creation which primarily served to repress non-Russians. This felicitous nonconformity accounts in part for Tatarstan's peaceful atmosphere. Another reason for Tatarstan's peaceful atmosphere is that, while sovereignty existed, people of different nationalities explicitly recognized the need to keep channels of communication open in their daily interactions with one another. For example, in 1999 a Tatar bazaar merchant introduced me to the Russian who worked at the stall next to hers. The Russian used the opportunity to inquire, "You're Tatar and I'm Russian, but we get along. You would tell me if there were something wrong, wouldn't you?" to which the Tatar acquiesced with a nod. The goal of this exchange, commonplace at the time, was to maintain dialogue. The same impetus caused the Russian-language press to publish disagreements over the past that could be construed as rooted in national difference. Even if people expressed mutually opposed opinions, as long as those opinions were given voice in Russian, agreement over what were the issues and terms of debate prevailed. The next section further illustrates this point.

Nightmares

Respublika Tatarstan's field of discourse in the early 1990s was not solely devoted to Russians and Tatars debating issues related to Soviet history and Tatarstan sovereignty. For example, on the same page containing several nightmare scenarios under the unifying banner, "The USSR is Our Common Home," appear letters promoting various points of view on relations between nationalities. These points of view include a letter from a Chuvash named Smirnov celebrating the fact that a Chuvash-language newspaper will soon begin publication in Tatarstan and describing the brotherly relations that exist among the trilingual (Chuvash, Tatar, Russian) residents of his village.⁵⁸ The page also contains complaints, from a Russian man named Stolbov and a female Tatar "Work Veteran" named Shagidullina, respectively, that the Tatar Social Center (TOTs) branch in Naberezhnye Chelny—Tatarstan's second largest city and the site of the mostly defunct KAMAZ automobile factories—is too extreme in its nationalist demands. At the same time, both Stolbov and Shagidullina asserted that Tatarstan should embrace bilingual education for all Tatarstan children. A fourth letter from a Tatar named Sabirov advocated opening separate schools for Tatar children so that they immerse themselves in

studying Tatar history, culture, traditions, and customs and become authentic patriots.⁵⁹

Projecting nightmare scenarios is common among apparent Russians, though they usually set them in the present or near future. For instance, Chërnykh from Elabuga, who claimed the right to live in Tatarstan because his grandfathers and great grandfathers built the region, employs this trope. For him the nightmare is “now” because Russian doctors and salesclerks have become rare—“before” he claims, as do many other Russians, no one cared about nationality. Chërnykh considers the current period to be even worse than World War II, when “every piece of bread was reckoned.” Other apparent Russians express imperialist attitudes in the guise of nightmarish imaginings of a world in which all hell has already broken—or will momentarily break—loose. Two letters from Russians expressing such attitudes are signed by “V. Dmitriev, Worker, Leninnogorsk” and “B. Tokarev, Participant in the Great Patriotic War, Zainsk.”⁶⁰

Dmitriev’s letter opens with an account of a train trip he took from Krasnodar, a city in southern Russia north of the Caucasus Mountains, to Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. The train was crowded with ethnic Armenian refugees fleeing Baku.⁶¹ Dmitriev describes a conversation he had with a girl eleven or twelve years of age who could not tell him which grade she was in because, by Dmitriev’s account, the Azerbaijan militant People’s Front had expelled her from school. He writes, “Think, comrades, how can it happen that children are expelled from school simply for belonging to a particular nationality?”⁶² Dmitriev continues:

When you read those debates about the events in the Caucasus, you are surprised at the flippancy of authors of such statements as, “Let them figure it out themselves.” That is how the Tatar Social Center’s leader Miliukov responded to *Sovetskaia Tatariia*. Yes, sure, let those peoples figure it out for themselves. But at what cost? At the cost of human lives?My eyes filled up with tears when in the train I heard the story about the afflictions of the unfortunate family of my fellow-travelers. They did not know what to expect in the future, how they would make a place for themselves, or where they were going to live. They were driven out of their apartment...So much grief, so much destruction in Armenia, where, in addition, the earthquake has left its horrifying imprint! And here, there is enmity between nations. What we ought to be thinking is that nowhere and never should this happen again.⁶³

Dmitriev’s letter is heart wrenching. Beyond this, it implies two things. First, there ought to be intervention in the Caucasus to prevent Azeris from victimizing Armenians, and, second, that Miliukov, with his non-

interventionist stance, may be promoting the spread of similar abuses in Tatarstan. The strength of Dmitriev's implications is augmented by apparent religious parallels—Azeris are Muslim, as are most Tatars, and Armenians are Christian, like Russians.⁶⁴ Dmitriev's attention to how nationalism interferes in education further emphasizes this parallel, since, as other letters appearing on this page of the newspaper demonstrate, school reform was a hotly debated question in Tatarstan at the time.

Another burning topic of debate in 1990 was whether to raise Tatarstan's status to that of a union republic. It caused a man named Tokarev from the town of Zainsk to send in a nightmare scenario letter to *Respublika Tatarstan*. Tokarev advocates against expanding local government bureaucracies and proposes that the money saved could be better spent to finance newspapers and theaters for each nationality living in Tatarstan. He suggests that the consequences of further political activity on the part of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic or TASSR (Tatarstan's official name until 1990) could be disastrous, asserting that the "national aspect" of government politics is a reflection of personal ambitions, which he pictures as follows:

Relations in the republic between the nationalities are somehow similar to a group of marathoners waiting for a start pistol to go off. Bestowing upon the TASSR the status of union republic would be, in my eyes, a signal to start an inter-national marathon with unforeseen consequences. The example of how all this began in the Baltics causes a person to consider the matter deeply.⁶⁵

The national conflicts transpired in the three Baltic republics were hardly violent, at least by comparison the full-fledged war that broke out between Azeris and Armenians. Thus, Tokarev's nightmare scenario is less alarmist than Dmitriev's. Rather, his letter insinuates that, should Tatarstan receive increased political authority, Russians may be forced to learn the non-dominant language—Tatar—to fully participate in society. He argues that reforms should remain at a cultural level, and not continue to escalate into political demands. Up until the late 1990s, Tatarstan Russians expressed similar concerns—they frequently worried out loud about their potential disenfranchisement and pointed to the Baltic States as an example of a situation they hoped to avoid. However, once Putin undermined sovereignty, they stopped concerning themselves with Tatar demands.

As a genre the nightmare letter is nearly absent from *Vatanyim Tatarstan* in the early 1990s. The one example comes from Medvedev, a Tatar living in Moscow. Medvedev's letter, entitled "Let us not give in to Chauvinists!" reads as follows:

More than two years have passed since Tatarstan's Declaration of Sovereignty was made. But the Tatar people have not yet escaped slavery. Day by day russification policies are growing stronger. The Slavs are uniting. In the place of KGB soldiers, Ataman Cossack ranks are organizing themselves. The simple-minded Tatar, alone having believed the promises, does not notice the tragedy.⁶⁶ It is indisputable that laws are needed to protect Tatarstan's sovereignty. After looking through the recent press on Tatarstan, I came to the following conclusion: many of Tatarstan's leaders' deeds cause me doubt. For what reason, for example, have the President and Parliament not appealed to the UN and foreign countries with regards to Tatarstan's sovereignty? Why are the public prosecutors, the courts, and the police force still in Russia's hands? And why do they not give permission for unarmed militias to organize?⁶⁷

There are three aspects to being a Moscow Tatar—who number up to 1.5 million—that may have influenced Medvedev to mail a nightmare letter to *Vatanyň Tatarstan*. The first is that Medvedev lives outside Tatarstan's borders and therefore not within a community where there is constant social pressure to negotiate. Second, living in Moscow, he is surrounded by a Russian-oriented majority, where alarmist reactions are normative and there is no taboo against expressing chauvinist opinions. Third, the majority of Tatars living in Moscow are Mishär Tatars. Mishärs have traditionally been involved in business and trade, often with the non-Tatar world, and they have a reputation for speaking their minds in mixed company. Why the Tatar-language newspaper's editors saw fit to publish this angry letter, when it is at such variance with the kind of discourse they usually promote, is a question worth considering. I would suggest, first, that the letter serves to demonstrate the existence of strong support for Tatarstan sovereignty among Tatars living outside of Tatarstan, and second, it gives vent to opinions Tatarstan Tatars are discouraged from expressing, though they may hold them. Evidence *Respublika Tatarstan*'s editors likewise transgressed discursive norms in order to manipulate public opinion shores up this interpretation.

Transgressing Discursive Boundaries

In 1991 *Respublika Tatarstan* printed a translation of an article by Fäüzia Bähräмова, Tatarstan's most vociferous and controversial nationalist, who is a writer and the leader of the Ittifaq Party. At the time the article was published, originally in the Tatar-language newspaper *Shaxri Kazan*, Bähräмова was a Tatarstan Parliament Deputy. In the article Bähräмова makes a number of ideological statements. She bemoans the fact that Tatars are ashamed of their language and culture, and instead "adopt the

low-grade cultural stuff of another nation,” that is, Russians. Bāyrāmova points out that the geographic expanse of land Tatars occupy, which she considers to be “Tatar land,” extends far beyond the borders of the Republic of Tatarstan. And she complains of Russian chauvinism towards other national cultures.⁶⁸ Although Tatars frequently make all three of these statements in both speech and writing, they are usually careful not make them in Russian. The letters from Russians and Tatars that *Respublika Tatarstan* printed in reaction to Bāyrāmova’s article without exception lambaste her for her nationalist extremism. By presenting Bāyrāmova’s opinions in the Russian language to a nationally mixed audience, the newspaper makes a scapegoat of her and helps to marginalize her from mainstream politics. Moreover, the reading public’s alarmist condemnation of Bāyrāmova’s nationalism helps to create a sense of inter-national solidarity, presumably an effect sought after by both editors and Tatarstan President Mintimir Shaimiev. Their condemnation reveals how discursive boundaries dividing Tatarstan’s two major language communities constrain what may be articulated in each language. Furthermore, this condemnation demonstrates that transgressing those boundaries can produce nightmare scenario fears that cause people to seek common ground.

Dissimilar Rationalizations

The social inappropriateness of Bāyrāmova’s article as a publication for a Russian-language audience and the general acceptance of her views as normative in Tatar language demonstrate that there can be great disparity in how Russian- and Tatar-writers represent similar issues. By disparity in representation, I do not mean the lack of consensus displayed by writers in the section on golden ages. Rather, I propose that actual perceptions of similar events may be disparate. Revealing this are two letters whose writers dissimilarly perceive unsuccessful encounters with government bureaucracies.

Both letters recount the sort of mundane bureaucratic struggles that clutter up post-Soviet life. In one, a man named Zadorov wrote into the Russian-language newspaper to complain that he was cheated at the bus station, while in another, a woman, Orkiya Äbjälilova, described to *Vatanyim Tatarstan*’s readership the poor service she received at the post office. These are both predictably familiar experiences to people who have lived in the former Soviet Union.

On August 31, 1992, Zadorov attempted to purchase a ticket at the Kazan bus station to the village of Ivashkino on the Cheremshanskii route.

The cashier charged him for a ticket all the way to Cheremshan, saying that cashiers are not obliged to sell tickets to destinations unknown to them.⁶⁹ Zadorov protested that Ivashkino is not unknown—indeed, the village's name appears on the tariff table posted on the bus station wall. When Zadorov insisted that the cashier give him the correct ticket and return the 18 rubles she overcharged him, she stood up and walked out of the cashier's booth. At that point, he sought out the manager, but she apparently refused to help him, and he was driven away. Zadorov expressed outrage at the lack of conscience and professional honor he encountered at the bus station and demanded the return of his money.⁷⁰

Äbjälilova, who identifies herself as an old woman, complained that she went to Kazan Post Office no. 33 in order to subscribe to *Vatanyñ Tatarstan*, where she was told, "That newspaper is not published in Tatarstan. It is not in the catalogue."⁷¹ Äbjälilova tried to explain to the clerk that the newspaper used to be called *Sotsialistik Tatarstan*. The clerk responded that subscribing to that newspaper cost too much money these days. After much arguing, the clerk finally gave Äbjälilova a subscription form, but didn't forward her request. Despite her advanced age (and implied physical frailty), Äbjälilova recounted that she later went to a different post office where she was able to get herself subscribed to the newspaper. Unlike Zadorov, who attributed the bus station employees' rudeness to a lack of conscience and professional honor, Äbjälilova believed that the poor service she received stemmed from the fact that the postal clerk was a Russian chauvinist. She explained that she had lived in Tashkent, Uzbekistan for a long time and subscribed to *Sotsialistik Tatarstan* there without any difficulty. By contrast, Äbjälilova noted:

In my native land, Tatarstan, these slaves from another nation constantly try to trip us up.⁷² Such injustices should not exist. Perhaps in some other post offices as well there are people who oppose subscribing to newspapers and journals published in Tatar. And some of our co-nationals, having believed their words, are not able to subscribe to newspapers.⁷³

Zadorov thought cashiers such as the one he encountered should lose their jobs, while Äbjälilova considered that people "who do not understand or value our language and, moreover, have no desire to do so" should not be employed. These two letters demonstrate that the language in which a person lives, when considered in light of the cultural truths and social realities a speaker of that language experiences, profoundly affect understandings of the world. The injustice Äbjälilova mentioned resonate with a collective Tatar experience. Indeed, whether or not

chauvinism motivated the postal clerk's behavior, encounters like these, which have accrued as Tatar-speakers have attempted to move Tatar language back into public domains, increasingly color their perceptions of "Russian" behavior.

Pushing the Envelope—Leninist Principles

Both Zadorov's and Äbjälilova's letters condemned abuses of petty authority by low-level government workers. These letters are generically similar, despite the fact that they appeared in different newspapers at different times and in different languages. Generic similarity between letters in Russian and Tatar is, however, more frequently the exception than the rule.

The Russian-language letters examined in this chapter nearly all concern the political. Although some letters in the Tatar-language press address political matters, many more focus on mundane, non-political requests to make small adjustments within the existing system. Examples of mundane requests—albeit introduced under the title "We are not Russia. We are Tatarstan"—include a letter from a woman who asks that her children be allowed to attend the first shift at school so that they do not have to walk home through the muck after dark and another from a woman distressed by the neglected state of her grandparents' village.⁷⁴ Announcements concerning the establishment of mosques in villages likewise provide examples of seemingly non-political events.⁷⁵

Other Tatar-language letters make ideological appeals to non-extant systems of values and social organization. Among these are several which, while grounded in Soviet institutions, presuppose the continued existence of "Leninist principles"—basing their demands upon expectations about Soviet order that date back to Vladimir Lenin's (1917–1924) pronouncements that nations have the right to self-determination.⁷⁶ Some of these expectations are revolutionary and concern the fluidity of Tatarstan's status in the Soviet hierarchy of polities, while others appeal to a pre-1930s assumption that Soviet citizens should be able to conduct official business in languages other than Russian.⁷⁷

For example, Mr. Kärimov, a retired schoolteacher from Yanga Karamaly Village in the Möslim Region praised the establishment of a Tatarstan Academy of Science and complained that, previously, one had to go to Moscow to defend a dissertation:

And there they did not approve very much of the fact that second-class people, or more accurately, Tatars, who only lived in an autonomy, were trying to get out into the larger world.

Even though there are seven million Tatars, since we did not have our own academies, we were not able to increase the number of our intellectuals and academics. We did not achieve a worldwide name. Meanwhile, peoples with populations slightly more than one million—Estonians and Latvians—and peoples of just over two million—Kyrgyz and Turkmen—have their own Academies of Science and hundreds of academics learn their own nation's history.⁷⁸

In contradistinction to Kazan Tatars, Estonians, Latvians, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen were conferred union republic status and each of these republics became independent states when the Soviet Union collapsed. Thus, Kärïmov's argument pertains as much to elevating Tatarstan's status within post-Soviet political hierarchy as it does to questions of education.

A second letter that harks back to pre-Stalinist assumptions about Soviet order comes from Săkinä Mingnullina of Kazan, who was trying to discover what benefits her family was entitled to receive as descendents of a rehabilitated enemy of the people. In response to two letters she sent to a Mr. Minhajev, Director of the Secretariat of the Tatarstan Cabinet of Ministers, she received one response from a man named Korzun. The response, which she includes in her letter to *Vatanyım Tatarstan*, is in Russian and states that in order to answer "the question of the rehabilitation of your family, it is necessary to inform us of the concrete facts (concerning your father and his incarceration). Without these facts, a search of the archives is impossible."⁷⁹ But, Mingnullina objects, these facts were clearly stated in her letter to Minhajev. However, our "letters were written in Tatar. If they had read them carefully, such a response would not have arrived. In response to our letters written in Tatar, both Minhajev and Korzun wrote back in Russian."⁸⁰ In January 1993, when *Vatanyım Tatarstan* printed the letter, Tatarstan had only been officially bilingual for three months, since November 1992, when the Tatarstan Supreme Soviet adopted Tatarstan's constitution. Nevertheless, by composing her requests to Minhajev in Tatar, Mingnullina insists upon her right to use her "native" language in conducting business with the government. Moreover, by publishing this letter, *Vatanyım Tatarstan* advocated that this right, which existed in the early Soviet period, be reinstated.

A third letter, making somewhat bolder demands than the two previous ones, is situated closer to the ideological end of the continuum. In 1992 *Vatanyım Tatarstan* published a letter by a self-identified pensioner who commented upon the Institute for Language, Literature, and History's

proposal to change the Tatar alphabet to create special letters for the sounds back [g] and back [k], unmarked orthographically since the 1930s.⁸¹ The pensioner suggested that, rather than modifying the existing Cyrillic alphabet, Tatars should adopt a Latin one, pointing out that half of the people living on the planet, including Turks, write in Latin script. Turks, he adds, have been able to make a lot of progress by writing in Latin. He calls attention to the fact that as soon as Moldovans transformed their republic into a sovereign government, they announced that it was necessary to switch over to a Latin alphabet. The writer concludes, “I think that Tatarstan should probably follow Moldova’s example. If we switch over to the Latin alphabet, our children would learn to write and read the words in pure [*chyn*] Tatar. And all of us would feel joy in hearing pure Tatar speech.”⁸²

It may seem as if the writer’s suggestion, like the writers of the two previous letters, are framed by the possibilities of the Soviet past, for Tatars officially used a Latin alphabet from 1926 to 1938. However, his suggestion turns out to be differently grounded, since he legitimates his call to change to a Latin script based on the examples of “half the peoples on earth,” citing the independent states of Turkey and Moldova in particular. The writer does not advocate a return to Leninist principles, but rather that Tatarstan take seriously its status as a sovereign government. And by printing the letter *Vatanyñ Tatarstan* not only demonstrated its support for sovereignty and the writer’s point of view, but also provided evidence for sovereignty’s popular support.

Ideological Transformations

Other *Vatanyñ Tatarstan* letters are completely ideological in the demands they make. Several of these complain that Tatarstan Parliament deputies are too conservative in their views or praise deputies, especially Fäüzia Bäyräмова and Fändäs Safiullin, who are considered people’s heroes for their efforts to promote the interests of Tatarstan sovereignty.⁸³ For example, a woman named Xisamova scolded the Tatarstan Parliament for being too much like Russia. Among the behaviors Xisamova considered worthy of chastisement were conducting parliamentary sessions in Russian and passing laws similar to Russia’s. Her opinion was that Russian laws were of “no use to a simple people like us. Those laws are suited to foreigners and profiteers.”⁸⁴ Xisamova, like the other writers who write letters making ideological demands, doesn’t consider Tatarstan part of the Russian Federation.

Letters advancing the notion that Tatarstan was not obliged to abide by Russian rules of conduct drew upon non-extant, alternative systems of social and political organization. One such letter appealed to Pan-Turkism, an ideology asserting that all speakers of Turkic languages share cultural and social commonalities.⁸⁵ Two other letters presumed the existence of a sovereign Tatarstan nation. Both these propositions were extremely dangerous even during Lenin's rule, even though that was a time of great ideological flexibility.

The Pan-Turkist letter was written in response to an article called "*Tugannar*" [Relatives] published in *Vatanym Tatarstan* concerning the difficulties encountered by Crimean Tatars—exiled from their homeland in Ukraine in 1944 by Stalin who accused the entire nation of being Nazi collaborators—attempting to move back to Crimea.⁸⁶ The writer, Äxät Xaysarov, recounted that in his city of residence—Yar Chally (Naberezhnye Chelny, in Russian)—a sum of money was gathered to help Crimean Tatars repatriate. Xaysarov's letter closes with the words, "Let us not deny aid to our fellow villagers—our brothers born of the same mother—in this difficult time."⁸⁷ That is, Xaysarov refers to Crimean Tatars as if they were from the same geographical region, the same village, and even the same family as himself and other Kazan Tatars.

Xaysarov's actions with respect to Crimean Tatars display a disregard for the political authority of actually existing states. Unlike some other nationalities—including Volga Germans—neither the Soviet nor the Russian government ever absolved Crimean Tatars of their alleged collaboration with the Nazis. Beyond this, even though many Crimeans live in Russia, when the letter was published Crimea was already officially located in another country, Ukraine, beyond Russia's borders. Here, Pan-Turkic bonds supersede the authority and borders of existing states.

Letter-writers presuming that Tatarstan is a sovereign polity, instead of merely positing the strength of Pan-Turkic bonds, expressed a complete lack of concern for the continued existence of the Russian Federation's political authority. These letters likewise presume the existence of a Tatarstan nation and imply that ethnic Tatars are its core members. Among letters that give voice to this perspective are the ones discussed above requesting that young men serve out their military service within the borders of Tatarstan.

Other letters treating Tatarstan's sovereignty as a *fait accompli*, while disregarding Tatarstan's location in the center of Russia's landmass, discuss possible candidates for the Tatarstan national anthem.⁸⁸ The editors introduce three letters discussing the anthem with the following words:

Valued Readers, despite the fact that Tatarstan acquired sovereignty three years ago, not all its attributes exist yet. Our people are especially tired of waiting for an anthem to be chosen. A great many letters concerning the anthem arrive in our offices. We are thus opening a special column with the intention of making your thoughts known to the people.⁸⁹

The term used in this introductory frame to connote the tired “people” is a collective noun employed to refer to a single ethnicity—that is, Tatars. Both the introduction and the letters presume the primacy of Tatar language and its speakers.

A writer named Kuganaky expressed the opinion that Tatarstan’s first anthem should be a full-fledged one with lyrics because, if it is not, people will make up their own lyrics. He did not, however, address the question of the language in which the lyrics should be sung. Another writer, Kurbatov, judged the relative merits of three candidates for anthems, explaining his preference, *Täftiläü*, which he refers to as the “light of the people’s eye” and soulful or *mongly*, by its virtue as a “pure Tatar song that both Tatars and Bashkirs love to sing.”⁹⁰ Kurbatov continued:

Täftiläü is the Tatar people’s favorite song and nourishment for its soul. An anthem based on this song would express the people’s spirit, the people’s joy. And that is not all. The representatives of other nations would lovingly listen to it.⁹¹

Although the anthem is supposed to represent Tatarstan as a whole, the suggestion is that Tatarstan’s anthem should primarily appeal to the sentiments of Tatar-speakers, while the role of other nations is to passively appreciate it.

Conclusions

Differences in how people compelled to send letters to the editor of *Respublika Tatarstan* and *Vatanyim Tatarstan* make their cases arise in the devices used to legitimate their opinions as somehow representative of other people—in how they imagine homeland and its relationship to the polity in which they live and in whether they use alarmist tactics (nightmare scenarios) or selective memory (golden ages) to represent their concerns. Significant differences in the scale of writers’ requests likewise exist. The Russian-language letters usually focus on the political sphere and tend to concern the Soviet past or the present. They pose questions like where have all these nationalists come from? Which Union-level poli-

ticians merit support? How are we to understand our Soviet past? By contrast, Tatar-writers tend to concentrate on change at the level of the mundane and the ideological. They usually focus on the polity at the village level and often appeal to value systems outside the acknowledged boundaries of the extant political system. This broad discrepancy in scale suggests that not only do Tatar-writers have strong ties to the particular localities in which they live, but also that Tatars compelled to write to the newspaper may feel disenfranchised from current political processes. Thus, while the Tatar letters may not represent public opinion at large, they do suggest the existence of Tatar-speakers who believe in participating in an alternative value system, among whom the newspaper editors, and the government officials from whom the former receive directives, would presumably count themselves.

While letters printed in different languages depict sometimes irreconcilably different worlds, those published in the Russian-language newspaper not only seem to accept the terms of a single debate no matter what the ascribed nationality of their writers, but also to demonstrate a lack of fit between attitudes towards Tatarstan sovereignty and self-identified or apparent nationality. In light of this, the inter-national dialogue in *Respublika Tatarstan* letters to the editor, albeit occasionally heated, seems to encourage peaceful social relations in Tatarstan. That is, even if readers disagree with the ideas expressed by letter-writers they assume belong to a different nationality, the government sees to it that they are made aware of them. Those ideas become part of the Russian-speaking public sphere.

Although many of the letters published by *Vatanyim Tatarstan* represent an extreme departure from recognized political institutions, ethnic Russians have neither the linguistic ability nor the desire to read them. *Vatanyim Tatarstan* serves therefore not inconsequentially as a forum for expressing ideas unpalatable to Russians. While the maintenance of a dialogue in the Russian-language newspaper encourages feelings of inclusive nationalism among Tatarstan's inhabitants, the pressure to use persuasion, as opposed to alarmism, among Tatarstan's Tatar-speakers helps the monolingual Russian population to feel both included in and rewarded for participating in nation-building processes.

That letters written in different languages represent different worlds is, in itself, not a surprising outcome. In the Soviet period, Russian and Tatar languages occupied urban and rural speech domains, respectively. In these two domains, people's referential worlds, social networks, and quotidian rhythms are profoundly different from one another. At the same time, as Tatar language has increasingly been re-introduced into urban public do-

mains, like government offices, academic institutions, and everyday street life, Tatar referential worlds have become more urban.

The development of *Vatanyġ Tatarstan* and other public spheres as fora for exchanging ideas in Tatar has simultaneously influenced the increasing differentiation of Tatar-speakers from Russian monolinguals. The differences between the letters published in each newspaper provide archival documentation of the divergence of Tatarstan's discursive worlds, even at the beginning of sovereignty. In daily life at the time, this was made manifest by huge mass demonstrations in Kazan's Freedom Square during which Tatar-speakers demanded sovereignty and a few political activists, among them Fäüzia Băyrămova, engaged in hunger strikes.

As Tatarstan sovereignty gained strength, Tatar-speakers continued to push for ideological change. One such push is the topic of the next chapter, which concerns the history of the outlawed alphabet that Tatars attempted to introduce in the post-Soviet period.

Notes

- 1 It might be argued that perestroika never took place, since the Soviet Union collapsed before any restructuring could get under way.
- 2 Before that time their names were *Sotsialistik Tatarstan* (Socialist Tatarstan) and *Sovetskaiia Tataria*, (Soviet Tataria), respectively. Their new names mean "My Fatherland Tatarstan" and "Tatarstan Republic" in Tatar and Russian, respectively.
- 3 See Brooks (1985) and Humphrey (1983) for sources that specifically deal with letters to the editor in the Soviet Union.
- 4 That is, the letters could act as performatives (Austin 1975[1962]).
- 5 See Faller (2002).
- 6 A tabulation of the locations from which the selected published letters to the editor were sent, when indicated, during the period examined (1990–1993) reveals the following breakdown: *Vatanyġ Tatarstan* printed 6 letters from Kazan; 3 from Tatarstan's second largest city, Naberezhnye Chelny; 3 from smaller Tatarstan cities (Zelenodol'sk, Almetvsk, Tüben Kama); 2 from unspecified locations in Tatarstan; one from Astrakhan; one from Samara oblast'; one from Siberia; 18 from Tatarstan villages; one from a village in Bashkortostan; one from Uzbekistan; and one from Moscow. By contrast, the letters printed in *Respublika Tatarstan* arrived from the following locales: 18 from Kazan; 7 from smaller Tatarstan cities (one from Nizhnekamsk, 2 from Almetvsk, one from Leninogorsk, one from Elabuga, one from Zainsk, one from Bugulma); one from Orenburg oblast'; one from Bashkortostan's capital, Ufa; one from Riga; 2 from Siberia (Perm and Magadan oblasts); and only 2 from Tatarstan villages.
- 7 Not surprisingly the Tatar-language newspaper appeared to be more important than the Russian-language one in its role as a "beacon." Tatars live in other parts of the Middle Volga region, in the neighboring republic of Bashkortostan, in Siberia, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and elsewhere.

- 8 I didn't interview his ethnic Russian counterpart at *Respublika Tatarstan* because that paper didn't play a similarly pivotal role in Tatarstan's linguistic political economy.
- 9 See Abu-Lughod (1990) on the romance of resistance.
- 10 Iskhakova (1999).
- 11 Specifically, *Respublika Tatarstan*: *Listaia stranitsy istorii* 8.03.90: 8, letter from Gibatullin and K gosudarstvennym simvola s uvazheniem 9.10.91: 2, and letters from Garipov and Safin. Linguistic signs of the first type include insertion of Tatar words into texts "bai" (rich person) and "tuy" (wedding) and "Uf allam" (O my Allah!). Examples of grammatical interference are more difficult to pinpoint not only because the majority of them presumably get edited out of the original texts, but also because while verb finality is obligatory in Tatar, it is optional in Russian. Similarly, omission of personal pronouns is stylistically acceptable in Russian, while their inclusion is optional in Tatar. So, neither of these features is particularly telling in regards to interference. However, there are a few examples of interference, such as the unusual use of a singular pointed out in the "Legitimizing Representation" section. Two additional examples come from a letter signed by F. Xasanov (*Listaia stranitsy istorii* 8.03.90). One occurs in a description of the writer's reaction to Stalin's death. He explains that he cried and writes, "To byly iskrennie sliozy!" [That (sic) were sincere tears!]. Tatar does not require numerical agreement: in a Tatar sentence marking "tears" as plural would suffice. The other indicator is not on the level of syntax, but rather of semantics. Xasanov writes: "*A kakov on—kommunizm, nikto ne videl i ne znaet*" (But, what sort of thing communism is, no one has seen and no one knows). Perhaps because Tatar is a language that uses evidentials, sentences that double up verbs of seeing and knowing to emphasize complete—or in the present case—complete lack of, knowledge are common. For example, Tatars commonly refer to the wisdom that old people possess as "seen a lot and known a lot [*küp körgän häm küp belgän*]." These examples demonstrate that some letters contain indicators of linguistic Tatariness, in addition to Muslim names. Even so, there are a significant number of Christian Tatars whose names are supposed to be indistinguishable from Russian names, though in actuality they may not be, which all makes for a muddy playing field with regards to parsing letter-writers as Tatar or not. Dates for citations from newspapers appear in European order, that is, date precedes month, as this is how dates are reckoned in Tatarstan.
- 12 Tatarstan newspapers publish editorials as a separate genre called "*tochka zreniia* [point of view]."
- 13 *Respublika Tatarstan* 24.07.90: 1. *Vatanyam Tatarstan* 3.6.92: 2 and 11.4.92: 2. These two announcements differ neither in font size nor with regards to any other visual cues from the letters among which they appear. Treating news items as letters to the editor is a Russian journalistic convention dating back to the mid-19th century, if not earlier. See my unpublished paper "Representing Shamil: Fact meets Fiction?" for an example.
- 14 The hierarchical differentiation of people in the publics created in these letters to the editor refutes Anderson's (1991) claims about reading publics.
- 15 *Vatanyam Tatarstan* 1.7.92: 2.
- 16 "...pis'ma 'za' i 'protiv' pochty stol' zhe odnoznachno razdeleny po natsional'noi prinadlezhnosti ikh avtorov..." (Ibid.).
- 17 In other instances, editors frame letters so as to provide us an interpretative model through which to read them. Sometimes this frame consists of pullout quotes, that is, phrases or modifications of phrases that appear in the letters, either as titles to

- individual letters or in large bold print in the center of a page of letters. In the Tatar-language newspaper, by contrast to the Russian one, the framing titles frequently do not correspond to anything explicitly stated in the published text of the letter. A second style of editorial framing consists of introductions to letters all concerning the same topic. A frame of this type, appearing in *Respublika Tatarstan*, asserts that the newspaper received equal numbers of letters on both sides of the argument in reaction to an article published in its pages by an ethnic Tatar writer demanding that the Tatar nationalist newspaper *Suvernitet* be shut down (*Respublika Tatarstan* 18.01.92: 6).
- 18 The notion of laminated authorship draws upon Goffman's (1981) division of speaker participant roles, in which he distinguishes between a statement's author, animator, and principal. The term author refers to the party who has selected the views being presented; the animator is the party giving voice to those views; and the principal represents the party whose position is established, whose beliefs are spoken, or who possesses commitment to the words the animator says. While in speech these three roles may reside within a single individual, the texts produced in letters to the editor all have multiple principals, even when they aren't signed by multiple authors. Depending upon the views expressed, a letter's principals could include Tatarstan or Russian government officials, the newspaper's editors, people sending in the letters, their friends; their families, or even all the members of their (Tatar-Russian or monolingual Russian) linguistic community. The animator of a given letter is presumably likewise one of its principals, as well as one of its authors.
 - 19 Bakhtin (1991).
 - 20 See Warner (1990).
 - 21 *Respublika Tatarstan* 3.03.90: 8–9; *ibid.*: SSSR—nash obshchii dom 31.03.90: 4; *ibid.*: Tak kuda idiot nash karavan? [Where is our caravan going?] 18.01.92: 7; *ibid.*: Iz nashei pochty [From our mailbox] 5.11.92: 3; *ibid.*: Narod ne pozvolit [The people will not allow it] 13.3.93: 10.
 - 22 For example, one writer signs his letter B. Ucharov, Head of the Technical Section of the Kazan House-building Kombinat (*Respublika Tatarstan*: Tak kuda idiot nash karavan? 18.01.92: 7).
 - 23 This division seems to hold true for the Tatar-language newspaper as well—two letters published in *Vatanyim Tatarstan*, complaining that the Tatarstan government is too conservative, are signed by current and former teachers. Only one writer complaining of Tatarstan's conservatism reminds us that he is a War and Labor Veteran (*Vatanyim Tatarstan* 1.4.92: 2; *ibid.* 3.6.92: 2; and *ibid.* 30.6.92: 1, respectively).
 - 24 As Astrakhan Tatars, for example (*Vatanyim Tatarstan* 30.9.92: 4). This practice parallels everyday conversational conventions, whereby Tatar-speakers identify themselves to each other by seeking common social networks through place of origin, kinship ties, and other institutions. While living in Kazan, I noticed that, unlike Russians, Tatars introducing themselves to new people usually identified themselves by place of rural origin prior to (and sometimes instead of) naming their professional occupations. This located them within a matrix of Tatar understandings of a Tatar-inflected world. A similar stress on specific locales—often rural—likewise emanates through Tatar popular songs and produces recognition in listeners.
 - 25 “Inter-national” with a hyphen calques the Russian word “*mezhnatsional'nyj*” which refers to relations between nationalities living on former Soviet territory. *Respublika Tatarstan* 9.12.90: 3.

- 26 The signers' names are as follows: R. Ibragimov, N. Nazmiev, A. Gel'man, K. Shigapov, T. Miasnikova, V. Kukarov, D. Saifullin, and Z. Sharapov.
- 27 *Respublika Tatarstan* 18.03.92: 1.
- 28 Though one writer refers to the Tatar language as that of the Tatar national poet Gabdullax Tukay, often referred to as "the Tatar Pushkin."
- 29 The Tatar Social Center's Russian acronym is TOTs, which stands for *Tatarskoe obshchestvennii tsentr*. TOTs was a key player in Tatarstan sovereignty activism and at the time had close connections with the Tatarstan government.
- 30 *Respublika Tatarstan*: SSSR—nash obshchii dom [The USSR is our common home] 31.03.90: 4.
- 31 *Mäxällä* is the term for the pre-revolutionary administrative neighborhood district organized around a mosque; "surface" is literally *kainyp toryp*, which means "boil up continuously." *Vatanyim Tatarstan* 11.4.92: 2.
- 32 In Tatar, "*mächet mötlävälliyate räise*." Tahirov mentions that aid has come from fellow-villagers living "abroad," although he does not specify where.
- 33 That is, "*bashka millättän keshelär*." Beyond this, since social and political changes to the liking of many Tatar-speakers were occurring in the early 1990s, it is not surprising that anger is largely absent from Tatars' letters.
- 34 This old man once told me, "My village no longer exists, although it once had 160 houses. Less than two miles away there is a Russian village on the water in the place where our village used to be. But, after Ivan the Terrible came, the Tatars were made to flee. In the new settlement we drilled a well and were able to farm again. But, the well was struck by lightening and destroyed and, as a result, my family went into trade. My father was one of four sons, all of whom were merchants. My father, the eldest, died when I was four or five years old. The second son also died young. The third and fourth sons were fur merchants in China and didn't return after the revolution. One of their sons, however, did and was sent to prison."
- 35 The use of a singular form for "brother," in place of the expected plural follows Tatar grammatical usage and reveals that the writer is Tatar-dominant. The phrase is "*vashego brata dovol'no mnogo*," *Respublika Tatarstan*: Tak kuda idiot nash karavan? 18.1.92: 7. The writer appears to be indexing Russians by using the kin term *brat*. In Central Asia, as Morgan Liu (2002) points out, and elsewhere Russians were referred to as "older brother." Tatar does not possess a generic term for brother, but, instead requires that speakers choose between older brother (*abiy*) and younger brother (*eni*), which are rendered by Tatars and some other ex-Soviet Turkic speakers in Russian as *brat* and *bratishka*, respectively.
- 36 *Respublika Tatarstan*: Tak kuda idiot nash karavan? 18.1.92: 6.
- 37 *Vy* is the formal you in Russian.
- 38 *Apa* (older sister/aunt) and *abiy* or *abziy* (older brother/uncle) are the kin terms used and may mark difference in age of as little as a year. Although corollary kin terms exist for younger siblings, they are not used to index hierarchy in everyday speech. Indeed, their absence, that is, speakers' lack of obligation to use them, marks their own hierarchical status. Female Tatars do, however, sometimes refer to younger females to whom they are not related as *kyzym*, which means both "my girl" and "my daughter."
- 39 This is most frequently done by invoking the epithet "mankurt," taken from famous Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov's (1983) novel, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*, which refers to a Eurasian Turk who shuns his or her native language and cul-

- ture. During the years I spent in Kazan I only heard members of the Tatar social club, described by Wertheim (2003), employing this scathing term.
- 40 Writers made the borders of their homelands apparent by using terms denoting birth-place (*tugan yak* in Tatar and *rodina* in Russian), country (*il* in Tatar), or abroad (*chit* in Tatar; *za rubezh* in Russian). The only letter that employs *za rubezh* places it at the edge of the Soviet Union's territory (*Respublika Tatarstan* 13.03.93: 10.).
- 41 *Vatanyim Tatarstan* 1.7.92: 2.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 19.01.93: 2.
- 43 Tatarstan's neighbors (Mordovia, Chuvashia, Samara, Astrakhan, etc.) all have significant ethnic Tatar populations. Up to 35% of Bashkortostan's population considers itself to be Tatar.
- 44 Zelenodol'sk has a population of about 100,000 people.
- 45 He came to Kazan to study at the Kazan Aviation Institute (*Vatanyim Tatarstan* 11.7.92: 2.).
- 46 "Gomer bue avyzybyzdan özep jyigan akchalarybyznyng räte kitte," (*Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Alai tügel, bolai ul 28.04.93: 2).
- 47 "...Seichas' my pochyty vse prodolzhaem otdavat' Tsentru. A obratno poluchaem zhalkie groshi. I esli poluchaem, to s protianutoi rukoi. Nakopivshiesia voprosy ne mozhem reshat' bystro, operativno..." (*Respublika Tatarstan* 18.03.92: 1).
- 48 The political borders of homeland may be differently engendered for Tatar-speakers living outside Tatarstan. An example of this difference occurs in a *Vatanyim Tatarstan* letter that does not fit the editorial frame under which it was published, "Let our sons do their military service on Tatarstan territory!" The letter, sent from Samara District, by the mother of at least three boys, one of whom served in Mongolia and another in the Baltic Republics, states that "[w]herever the country sends them, that's where men should do their service..." (*Vatanyim Tatarstan* 1.7.92: 2.). Although this woman is a Tatar-speaker, her "country" appears to be the Russian Federation, or perhaps still the USSR.
- 49 "Ia tatarka, s 1953 goda zhivu za predelami Tatarstana" (*Respublika Tatarstan* 18.03.92: 1).
- 50 "Ilibez häm jirebez öchen Böek Vatan sygyshynda 20 million keshe hälak buldy. Ä bez tugan jirebezneng kaderen belmimez, satabyz" (*Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Alai tügel, bolai ul 28.04.93: 2).
- 51 In contrast, one Tatar-writer sends a letter about his Russian friends (*Vatanyim Tatarstan* 11.4.92: 2). The fact that its writer felt compelled to compose it, as well as the newspaper's editors' decision to publish it, indicates its likely remarkableness.
- 52 According to an editorial comment, the pages represent a further installment of letters received in response to an article V. Zinnatullin published in *Respublika Tatarstan* on 24 January 1990.
- 53 Zinnatullin's identifiably Tatar surname implies that he idealizes "Tatar" village life. However, some villages are ethnically mixed.
- 54 *Respublika Tatarstan* 3.03.90: 8.
- 55 She writes, "My byli syty po appetitu," that is, "Our appetites were always satisfied" (*ibid.*).
- 56 Chuvashes are Christian Turkic-speakers who number third in population in Tatarstan after Tatars and Russians.
- 57 *Op. cit.*

- 58 This newspaper did indeed get off the ground and begin publication.
- 59 The writer's reason for this is that, he claims, in today's mixed schools, "Already beginning with the first grades Tatar children are called *basurmans*, naked-foreheads (*gololoby*), and damned Asiatics. As a result, children of Tatar nationality deny their own people, language, culture, and traditions. An entire generation infected with national nihilism is growing up. And one cannot expect them to be internationalists." *Respublika Tatarstan*: SSSR—nash obshchii dom 31.03.90: 4.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Baku is the capital of Azerbaijan. In the 1920s, Soviet officials drew the borders of Azerbaijan so that the republic contained an ethnic Armenian enclave called Nagorno-Karabakh. Nagorno-Karabakh became the site of one of the numerous bloody civil wars that occurred during the Soviet Union's dissolution.
- 62 Op. cit.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Although the differences in Azeri and Tatar Islam (Shiite and Sunni, respectively) are great, perhaps even greater than the differences between Armenian Christianity and Russian Orthodoxy, Dmitriev's letter implies an erasure of these differences.
- 65 Op. cit.
- 66 One promise Medvedev referred to may be Yeltsin's 1990 declaration that Tatarstan should take all the sovereignty it could swallow.
- 67 The second paragraph of the letter reads as follows:
 "They are teaching Russian children and children of other nations (*millät*) the mother tongue (i.e. Tatar language). And it is known that in Tatarstan Tatar and Russian languages have been made government languages. I welcome this. The Tatar classes in ethnic Russian schools are necessary for assimilation. It is long ago time to become cognizant of the deceptive, cruel (*yavuz*—the epithet Tatars use to refer to Ivan the Terrible) intention to undermine Tatarstan sovereignty. In a word, the people (*xalyk*) voiced its opinion quite strongly in the referendum. Let us not give in to those who have sold their souls, to chauvinists, to adventurers!" (*Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Alai tügel, bolai ul 28.4.93: 2).
- Medvedev's point about assimilation is not entirely clear. The word he uses for class (*klass*) refers to a cohort of children who all study the same subjects together through the course of their schooling. In Tatarstan, Tatar classes differ from Russian ones in that the study of Tatar language is more intense and literary—the assumption is made that children are already fluent in Tatar—than in the Russian classes, where children study Tatar only very superficially. Thus, perhaps by "assimilation" Medvedev means assimilating Tatar children as members of a Tatar-speaking community. It is certain that he is not referring to assimilation of ethnic Russian children to Tatar culture. Indeed, although children of mixed parentage can conceivably study in a Tatar group, in fact this rarely happens for long.
- 68 *Respublika Tatarstan*, "Esli ty nastoishchii tatarin...[If you're a genuine Tatar...]" 25.10.91: 2.
- 69 "[N]a neizvestnye im, kassiram, ostanovki oni bilety prodavat' ne obiazany," (*Respublika Tatarstan*: Iz nashei pochty: Chto khotiat, to i vorotiat 5.11.92: 3).
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 "[A]ndiy gazeta Tatarstanda chykmii, katalogta iuk," (*Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Xatlar kilä, alar söili belä: küngeldäge töerläre 30.6.92: 1).

72 Literally, “stick their feet out.”

73 Ibid.

74 *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Bez Rusiia tügel, bez—Tatarstan: Balalarybyz karan’gyda kala and ‘tuldyz’ nigä sünde 9.10.90: 2, respectively.

75 *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Xatlar kilä...Alar söili belä 11.4.92: 2 and *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Xalykka xezmättä 3.6.92: 2.

76 Lenin (1927[1914]).

77 Up until 1920, it was not clear whether Tatarstan would receive the status of a union or an autonomous republic, or even how large the republic’s territory would be. Please see Schafer (1995). The assumption that Soviet citizens should be able to conduct official business in their native language dates to the korenizatsiia period in the 1920s. See Brubaker (1996), Hirsch (2005), Martin (2001), Slezkine (1994a and 1994b), and Suny (1993), among others.

78 *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Xalykka xezmättä 11.4.92: 3

79 *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Achynyp yazgan xatlar: Javap kanägat’ländermäde (The answer did not please): 19.01.93: 2.

80 Ibid.

81 Tatar, like other Turkic languages, has vowel harmony. This means that vowels are pronounced either in the front or the back of the mouth. Tatar’s Cyrillic alphabet, unlike the Cyrillic alphabets for languages like Kazakh and Kyrgyz, does not mark the back forms of [k] and [g].

82 *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Xatlar kilä...Alar söili belä 11.4.92: 2.

83 In 1999 Safiullin resigned his post as a member of Tatarstan’s Parliament when he was elected to the Russian Duma. *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Bez Rusiia tügel, bez—Tatarstan 9.10.90: 2; *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Xatlar kilä...Alar söili belä: Dustan doshman yakyn bulmas 11.4.92: 3; *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Tatar kaida da tatar: Yazmalary joky kachyra 11.7.92: 2; and *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Alai tügel, bolai ul: Bezneng Safiullinybyz..., as well as Üzebez xäl itik! 28.4.93: 2.

84 *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Alai tügel, bolai ul: Üzebez xäl itik! 28.4.93: 2.

85 See Landau (1995) for a more detailed explanation.

86 Crimean Tatars are one of the nationalities Stalin deported en masse to Siberia and Central Asia. See Uehling (2000). Others include Chechens, Volga Germans, Mesket Turks, and some Poles, inter alii.

87 The sentence in Tatar reads as follows: Yaktashlar, tugandash kardäshlärebezne avyr chakta yardämnän tashlamyik. (*Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Gazetabyznyng bügenge sany ukuchylarybyz xatlarynnan tuplandy 30.6.92: 1.)

88 The letters imply that the three melodies had been performed on Tatarstan Television so that viewers could form opinions about which of them should become Tatarstan’s anthem.

89 *Vatanyim Tatarstan*: Gimn turynda söiläshäbez 8.5.93: 2.

90 Bashkirs are a neighboring Turkic-speaking, Muslim nation whose titular autonomous republic lies just to the east of Tatarstan. See Chapter 7 for more on *mong* as a vehicle for reproducing national unity.

91 Op. cit.

CHAPTER 3

CREATING SOVIET PEOPLE: THE MEANINGS OF ALPHABETS

After an extraordinary concert the klezmer band *Simkha* gave at Kazan's House of Actors, Nur *apa*, a Tatar-speaker, introduced me to the Yiddish-speaking leader of the mostly Jewish band. She presented him as Leonid Dawidovich, pronouncing the [v] in his patronymic like a [w], as the letter would be pronounced in Tatar. He responded, "I'm actually Leonid Dayidovich—it was Russians who made it [w]." Nur *apa* nodded gravely with deep-seated recognition.

Field notes, Kazan, 25 April 2000

Neither of the participants in this exchange spoke Russian as a native language. Yet, they both took for granted that formally introducing the band's leader required following the Russian convention of addressing a person by first name and a patronymic constructed according to Russian morphology. Rather than question the appropriateness of using a Russian convention, the speakers focused on the pronunciation of a particular letter and treated that as the imposition of Russian cultural dominance.

This chapter begins to address the question of why people in the former Soviet Union think that language equals culture. It describes how Soviet nationalities policies made a direct link between languages, groups of people, and resource allocation based upon a cultural evolutionary model. It explores the relationships between the languages ethnic groups speak and the alphabets used for writing those languages. It demonstrates the ways intellectuals and politicians communicate ideas about cultural evolution obliquely using alphabets and how perilous these communications can be.¹ Finally, it reveals that alphabets may be more dangerous today than they were during the Soviet Union's formative period.

In 1999, the Tatarstan government adopted a Latin-based alphabet for Tatar language, which had been written in Russian-based Cyrillic letters since 1938. Schoolchildren began learning the new alphabet in 2000. In 2002, the Russian Duma outlawed that alphabet as a threat to national security and mandated that all official languages of the Russian Federation be written in Cyrillic. That same year, Tatarstan stopped teaching schoolchildren the new Latin alphabet. Then, in 2004, the Tatarstan government

took its case to Russia's Constitutional Court, which threw the suit out. As of 2011, the status of Tatar's Latin alphabet remains in flux. When I visited Kazan in 2006, someone gave me a Tatar book in the new alphabet and, when I asked whether printing the book wasn't illegal, insisted that it was okay because private—not government—money funded its publication. Many Tatar online publications continue to use Latin instead of Cyrillic, but by doing so they are breaking the law and potentially putting themselves at risk of prosecution. The situation seems absurd. What does it matter to the Russian authorities what letters Tatars use to write their own language? A great deal, it turns out.

In order to understand why it matters to Tatars and Russians alike what alphabet Tatar is written in, it is necessary to know the trajectory of language development in the Soviet Union during the first decades of the country's existence. While the Soviet central government engaged in great efforts to promote the country's various languages in the 1920s as part of a campaign to support the advancement of hundreds of non-Russian minority groups, after the mid-1930s, the general trend shifted to one of persistently promoting Russian language above all others.² Historically, this trajectory parallels one according to which Russian national culture became increasingly the standard against which non-Russian cultures' evolutionary development was measured. That is, adopting Russian's Cyrillic alphabet as a model for the alphabets of the Soviet Union's other languages illustrates one way in which the Soviet state forced non-Russians to live with Russian linguistic and cultural hegemony.

Since the 1920s, five different orthographic systems—some of which were modifications to already-existing alphabets—have represented Tatar language. The three significant changes were from Arabic script to a Latin alphabet in 1926, from Latin to Cyrillic in 1938, and the post-Soviet efforts to re-implement a “perfected” Latin script. Each change from one orthographic system to the next has been spurred by fundamental ideological transformations in the political order of the region. For Tatars and other non-Russians, attitudes about orthography have served as significant indicators of integration into and disaggregation from the Russian-run state, while Russians' attitudes towards different alphabets indicate fluctuations in the strength of collective xenophobia.

My discussion of Soviet language development is divided into two main parts. The first part provides a general background on Soviet language policies and traces the arc along which successive Soviet leaders raised the status of the majority language, Russian, vis-à-vis the other Soviet languages. The second part of my discussion illustrates how Soviet

and post-Soviet nation-builders have used alphabet reform as a vehicle for political change and explains why alphabets continue to be volatile. It demonstrates how Soviets theorized that orthography would turn Russian imperial subjects into members of Soviet nationalities in the 1920s and 1930s and how, subsequent to the Soviet Union's collapse, Tatar nation-builders have been attempting to employ alphabet reform as an instrument for decolonization.

Post-Soviet debates about orthography make two things clear. The first is that when a group of people begins engaging in decolonization, the symbolic forms upon which that group draws to signify the new order are the very ones the colonial power has defined as essential aspects of its identity. The second point, further developed in subsequent chapters, is that while decolonization begins by rallying around certain essential identity traits, the process of decolonization changes the people involved in it with consequences they cannot predict. Thus, while post-Soviet Tatar intellectuals realized that they were pushing the envelope by reverting Tatar script to a Latinized version, they did not foresee that Russia's central government would declare the new alphabet illegal.

Soviet Language Planning

In its initial stages in the 1920s, Soviet language planning efforts employed brigades of linguists and ethnographers to chart the nations and standardize the languages of the various peoples living in the USSR. These linguists and ethnographers organized their research findings, which were then integrated into Soviet nationalities policy, based upon a Leninist interpretation of Lewis Henry Morgan's theories of cultural evolution.³ The more evolved a nationality was considered to be, the greater the number of resources and the larger the territory allocated to further its development. Resources went to create national schools, promote the creation of journals, newspapers, theaters, and operas in national languages, and to develop specific national costumes, dances and other artifacts of national culture. These efforts served to fix Soviet national cultures as distinct, bounded units.

Although most groups had never enjoyed the political autonomy that usually precedes a national movement, many were nonetheless dubbed "nations" or at least "nationalities." The motivation behind this was to accelerate Soviet people along a cultural evolutionary trajectory by promoting their fluorescence and to give the illusion that they had the right to

self-determination and were voluntarily opting to join the worldwide socialist revolution.⁴ One primary method for accelerating cultural development was to codify—and sometimes to create outright—standardized languages for newly discovered “nations.” Following the 19th-century European nationalist tradition, Soviet language codification practices presumed that each language was a discrete, self-contained system spoken by a single and likewise discrete nationality or nation. At the level of practice, this meant that individuals were supposed to speak their nation’s language as their “mother tongue” and that their children were required to study that language in government-run schools, whether or not the language was one that any of them spoke.⁵

In 1926, two years after Lenin’s death, the All-Union Central Committee for the New Turkic Alphabet was formed. One of its most prominent members was Nikolai Marr, Director of the Soviet Union’s sole linguistics institute in the 1920s, and an advocate of Latin as the most socially evolved script. Marr’s linguistic, though not his orthographic, theories penetrated all levels of Soviet linguistics from the late 1920s through 1950. His main contribution to Soviet linguists was his Japhetic theory, which stated that languages constitute part of the Marxian superstructure and therefore change according to the economic base of the society in which they are spoken. Thus, Marr thought that each language emerged at a particular stage in history corresponding to a change in the mode of production through a process of hybridization with the previously existing language. Pitting himself against Indo-Europeanist scholars, Marr asserted that languages are not diversifying, but rather slowly fusing and that under communism all world languages will hybridize into a single language.⁶ Incorporated into Soviet nationalities policy to justify modifying the standards for non-Russian languages to make them more like Russian, the Japhetic theory promoted the shrinkage of many Soviet languages and the death of some.⁷

Demonstrating how cultural evolution was translated into linguistic policy, N.F. Yakovlev, a proponent of latinization and a specialist in North Caucasian languages, published an article in 1926 called “The Problems of National Writing Systems for the Eastern Peoples of the USSR,” as a proposal for the First All-Soviet Turkologists Conference. It divides Soviet Eastern peoples into four categories, according to their perceived level of cultural evolution, and dictates which administrative resources should be devoted to their continued linguistic development. The article appeared in *The Battle for a New Turkic Alphabet*, a volume unavailable in the United States.

Stage of Literacy	Economic Development	Administrative Resources
Small nationality Illiterate, with growing bilingualism	Not described	Stage I: Grammar and corresponding literature—ABC books, dictionaries, books for learning to read in the mother tongue Stage II: From second grade on, transition to dominant nationality's language—promoted by using the dominant nationality's alphabet to write the mother tongue
Middle-sized nationality Monolingual, Illiterate	Agriculture	Stage I: Schools and literature appropriate for an agricultural population in the national language: text books, dictionaries, popular and artistic literature Stage II: Literature and schools for the proletariat in the dominant nationality's language; preparation of teachers and departments for studying native language in pedagogical training schools
Middle- to large-sized nationality Monolingual, some tradition of writing in national language	Own proletariat, bourgeoisie, and intelligentsia	Stages I and II , as described above, plus literature for the intelligentsia and the Party apparatus; departments of study of the native language and area studies at the university level
Economically and culturally dominant nationality Old tradition of writing Examples: Azeris, Kazan Tatars, Yakuts, Ukrainians	Not described	All of the above, plus scholarly and technical literature and universities entirely in the native language

Figure 3.1. National Writing Systems⁸

Yakovlev's proposal places speakers of various languages in a cultural evolutionary schema of nationalities according, in part, to their level of economic organization and literacy. Yakovlev incorrectly assumes that most people are monolingual and suggests that a language spoken by people who engage in agriculture cannot be used by a people who have their

own proletariat, as if languages and means of production were intrinsically linked.⁹ Agriculture, of course, implies rural habitation, while the capitalism implicit in the existence of national proletariats, bourgeoisies, and intelligentsia connotes an urban setting. Yakovlev thus suggests that a residential locale's size and permanence is a matter of cultural evolution.¹⁰

Imposing hierarchical distinctions based upon perceived and real linguistic and cultural differences among people—including means of production, development of a literary language, diversity in socioeconomic classes, and place of habitation—was the foundation of Soviet nationalities policies. As a consequence, nationality became a highly politicized category of identity at every level of society. Indeed, contemporary historian Uli Schamiloglu argues that judgments about stages of cultural evolution were politically motivated in ways that essentialized colonized peoples whom the authorities perceived as potentially threatening to Russian hegemony.¹¹ The introduction of such hierarchical judgments paved the way for eventually lowering the status of certain nations.

Marrism and National Education

With the publication of *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics* in 1950, Stalin dethroned Marrist theoretical approaches to linguistics, asserting that languages were neither part of the base nor the superstructure and that, in fact, they were not class-based.¹² That same year the newspaper *Pravda* published a discussion on linguistic problems, interspersed with Stalin's corrections of the linguists' "mistakes."¹³ In these corrections Stalin dismisses Marr's rejection of linguistic families (since Slavic languages are related); the class nature of language (since Russian did not significantly change after the October Revolution); and Marr's famous four-element analysis (which claimed that original language consisted of four magical words).¹⁴

Although Stalin's linguistic revisions in the early 1950s characterized Marr's ideas as inconceivably absurd, he had lent his official support to those very ideas for more than 20 years.¹⁵ And despite his rejection of Marrism, the ideas Stalin proposed beginning in 1950 still characterize the relationships between languages and their speakers unrealistically. For example, based upon nationalist ideas that emerged in 19th-century Europe, Stalin claims that single languages represent single bounded, monolingual peoples. That is to say, each identifiable "people" possesses a unique language.¹⁶ Though he dismisses the particulars of Marr's stages

of language development, Stalin nevertheless embraced both Marr's presumption that languages develop teleologically and his theory of hybridization. He asserts that prior to the "slave-owning period of cultural evolution," languages had sparse vocabularies and primitive grammars.¹⁷ But, Stalin maintains, progress has been made. For example, since the period when Pushkin lived in the early 19th century, Russian grammar has improved and many obsolete words have disappeared.¹⁸ Stalin explains that hybridization occurs when "one of the languages emerges triumphant and the other dies," during which "the vocabulary of the victorious language is somewhat enriched at the expense of the defeated language," and which "is what happened, for example, with Russian."¹⁹ After the worldwide victory of socialism, "national equality will be a reality" and "zonal" languages—which may be German, English, and Russian—will "coalesce into one general international language."²⁰ Stalin thus implies that Russian will be "victorious" above all other Soviet languages, including his native Georgian.

It was not until Khrushchev came to power that Stalin's russocentrism was adopted as official policy applied to the national education of the USSR's minority peoples. Under Brezhnev russocentrism in the Soviet Union achieved grotesque proportions, as Russian language became endowed with high morality. Non-Russians were encouraged to abandon their native languages because doing so was touted as progressive, mature, and "according to the laws of natural development."²¹ At the same time, Soviet ethnographers began to laud bilingualism, praise of which filtered into work by western scholars on ethnic minorities and schooling in the USSR.²²

When Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he did not significantly alter Soviet language policies. However, like Khrushchev, Gorbachev did not actively seek to glorify Russian.²³ Even so, some Soviet scholars continued Russian's glorification without direct government prompting. The debates published in Kazan in a volume called *Bilingualism: Typology and Function*, edited by Tatar linguists Zakiev, Ganiev, and Iskhakova—all prominent nation-builders—in 1990, illustrate the continuation of Russian linguistic hegemony into the glasnost period. In this volume a linguist with the Russian surname of Maksimov lauds the "evolution" of the "old, artificial Tatar literary language" through what he calls the "broadening of Tatar semantic fields."²⁴ Despite Maksimov's denial that Russian has influenced Tatar, his "evolution" in fact constitutes lexical and morphological russification of the language.²⁵ Maksimov calques Russian linguistic features into Tatar, impoverishing the literary language by erasing certain

aspects of Tatar grammar and the history of linguistic exchange between Tatars and the Ottoman Empire. This, moreover, decreases the sheer number of words in the USSR's collective linguistic repertoire by replacing existing terminology in non-Russian languages with Russian words.²⁶

Arguing the other side of the debate is a linguist with the Tatar surname, Sagdeeva, who contends that Soviet politics narrowed the social functions of Tatar and blames Stalin for this because he "deviated from Leninist norms."²⁷ Sagdeeva complains of Russian interference in urban Tatar speech with examples that closely resemble Maksimov's calques. Thus, she objects to the word *kul'turaly*—an adverb formed from the Russian noun *kul'tura*— meaning "in a cultured way."²⁸ But, the Tatar word for "cultured" [*mädäni*], which is borrowed from Arabic, references a more elevated social world than the one indicated by the quotidian "*kul'turaly*." Not dissimilar from Maksimov's "evolution," replacing *kul'turaly* with *mädäni* would narrow Tatar's functional range and deny the language's lexical diversification during the Soviet period.²⁹

The approaches of both these linguists rely upon data that skew observations of speech practices in order to make political claims. Political claims likewise define the terms of Soviet and post-Soviet orthographic debates. The terms of these debates, which continue to be deeply grounded in assumptions that emerge from the particulars of Soviet history, disclose ideological controversies over the relationships between languages, nations, and levels of cultural evolution.

The Politics of Graphics

Taking a stand against Russian imperialism, Vladimir Lenin sought to develop the ethnic cultures of groups living within Soviet territory. As part of this, Lenin rejected the idea that Russian language should have a privileged role in the new Soviet state. Since Russian is written in Cyrillic, Lenin supported Soviet planning to create non-Cyrillic alphabets for previously unwritten languages and to latinize Turkic and other languages.³⁰

Up until the 1920s, Soviet Muslims who spoke Turkic languages—including people from present-day Azerbaijan, Bashkortostan, Crimea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and republics in the North Caucasus—wrote in various Arabic scripts which they considered to represent a common Turkic tongue.³¹ This all changed during the USSR's state-building period. At that time, Soviet authorities sought to parse Muslims into separate nations. Because they considered the primary

indicator of a nation's existence evidence of a national language, where a definitive language didn't already exist, they were ready to urge on its creation.

In the past century, two different ideologies have propelled changes in how the Tatar language is written. First, during Soviet state-building in the 1920s, an anti-colonialist ideology prevailed according to which each identifiable nation had the right to its own non-Russian alphabet. Nested within this ideology was a belief that an alphabet is supposed to both represent a language's phonology transparently and reflect the culture associated with that language. Second, in the late 1920s and 1930s another ideology emerged, one which maintained that changing non-Russian languages to make them more closely resemble Russian could accelerate a nation's cultural evolution.³²

Changes in Soviet orthographic policies altered people's lives and differentiated Turkic-speaking Soviet Muslims in at least two ways. First, generational splits occurred twice in the 20th century when new alphabets rendered previously existing reading publics suddenly illiterate. This unusual form of illiteracy had two major social effects, excluding formerly literate people from certain kinds of social and political participation and preventing people literate in current orthographic systems from familiarizing themselves with works published in previously used alphabets. Second and quite profoundly, orthographic changes have promoted the differentiation of Turkic-speakers into separate nationalities. Prior to the alphabet changes of the early Soviet period, people who were literate in one Turkic language variety could read texts written in any other variety. At the time vowel differences constituted the greatest barrier to communication among speakers of different Turkic language varieties and Arabic scripts did not mark them. The creation of different alphabets has fragmented knowledge once generally accessible to Turkic-speakers. In the post-Soviet period, this fragmentation causes minority nationality scholars to think that their particular national language was singled out for russification, since they are unable to read source materials in other languages which prevents them from piecing together the big picture of Soviet alphabet reform and its effects.³³ This is part of the legacy of Soviet colonialism.

L.I. Zhirkov, a specialist on Tajik language who was employed by the Soviet government to modernize non-Russian languages, clarifies early Soviet period views about the presumption of a one-to-one correlation between nations, languages, and alphabets, as follows:

You only have to open up a map of our Soviet Union and you will see, by the geographic nomenclature itself, that on the territory of pre-revolutionary Russia tens of new national republics and provinces are now located. Under each new geographic name is hidden a new, young, national culture—at the very least, under the majority of them. A national culture, naturally, presumes national schools. Schools require books, print, and an alphabet. A young national culture demands that this book, this print, this alphabet should not be ethnic Russian, but rather one's own.³⁴

Not only did Soviet linguists in the 1920s posit that young national cultures deserved their own alphabets, but, as the famous Orientalist M. Pavlovich suggested, those alphabets should be simple and easy to acquire.³⁵

Beyond this, Soviet linguists—especially Zhirkov—tended to equate orthographic systems with political ones.³⁶ Zhirkov explicitly articulated a conviction that Cyrillic orthography generated the corrupt politics and inequality associated with Byzantium, while Latin scripts promoted incorporation into Enlightenment-influenced, western political structures that guaranteed equality to everyone. Thus, he declared that Russian politics had been necessarily Byzantine—that is, corrupt, patriarchal, and rife with intrigues, cruelty, cunning, and protectionism—because the Russian alphabet is based on Greek, while speakers of western Slavic languages (specifically, Poles and Czechs) had been incorporated into western political structures where a Latin alphabet reigned.³⁷ According to this belief, adopting the Latin alphabet was essential to implementing the new, modernist Soviet order.

The Orthography Merry-Go-Round

Although some Muslim intellectuals in the Russian Empire had begun to advocate for a Latin alphabet as early as the mid-19th century, it was not until 1920 that the Russian authorities began to take their requests seriously.³⁸ While the majority of Soviet linguists supported the adoption of Latin, in contradistinction to the later situation under full-blown Stalinism, dissent was allowed.³⁹ Advocates of latinization, like Lenin, considered it to be technically easier to learn than Arabic, and saw its adoption as a means to promote mass literacy.⁴⁰ Pavlovich claimed that children could learn to read in Latin script in a month or less, asserting that mastering Arabic script required a year of constant study.⁴¹ Zhirkov thought Arabic inappropriate because it contained too few letters to represent all the sounds of “Eastern” languages.⁴² Samad Agamalioglu, one of Azerbaijan's foremost cultural leaders, and Galimjan Ibrahimov, a leading Tatar

linguist, proposed that Arabic was defective for teaching school subjects, since one reads mathematical formulas from left to right, while Arabic is read from right to left.⁴³

شازاروبيجاندا قامول شيرلگهت ياكى شازاروبيجا
 Jönitürk alifbasınıñ düzülüşü.
 ياكى تۇرك ئەلىپباسىنىڭ تۈزۈلۈشى.

A a ا ا	B b ب ب	C c ج ج	Ç ç چ چ	D d د د
E e ه ه	Ğ ğ غ غ	F f ف ف	G g گ گ	H h ه ه
I i ي ي	L l ل ل	J j ج ج	K k ك ك	Ł ł ل ل
M m م م	N n ن ن	Ŋ ŋ ڭ ڭ	O o و و	Ō ō و و
P p پ پ	Q q ق ق	Ų ų ق ق	R r ر ر	S s س س
T t ت ت	U u و و	V v و و	X x خ خ	Y y ي ي
Z z ز ز	Ž ž ز ز	Š š ش ش	apostrof اوستروف	na'lym نا'ليم

26 рос. Азәрбајҹанда беренче яналиф алфавиты („Магореф“, 1923, № 2).

Figure 3.2. Azeri Latin Alphabet, 1923 (Kurbatov 1999)

Jan, a tatar әлифбасе.

Азәрбајҹанда	Яналиф	Азәрбајҹанда	Яналиф	Азәрбајҹанда
Aa	Аа	Na	На	ن
Bb	Бб	Nn	Нн	ن
Cc	Сс	Oo	Оо	و
Çç	Чч	Óó	О́о́	و
Dd	Дд	Pp	Пп	پ
Ee	Ее	Rr	Рр	ر
Éé	Е́е́	Ss	Сс	س
Əə	Әә	Tt	Тт	ت
Ff	Фф	Uu	Уу	و
Gg	Гг	Vv	Вв	و
Hh	Һһ	Xx	Хх	خ
Ii	Ии	Yy	Йй	ي
Jj	Јј	Zz	Зз	ز
Kk	Кк	Zz	Зз	ز
Ll	Лл	Uuu	Ууу	ش
Mm	Мм	Ww	Вв	و

27 рос. Татарстанда яңа алфавит („Яналиф“, 1927, №4).

Figure 3.3. Tatar Latin Alphabet, 1927 (Kurbatov 1999)

At least as important a reason, and perhaps the primary one, for wanting to create a Latin alphabet was Arabic script's perceived unsuitability due to its associations with Islam.⁴⁴ Like things Byzantine, Islam was considered to be antithetical to openness and equality. Thus, statements supporting latinization contained the clear message that Turkic languages should discard their Arabic scripts in order to shed their Islamic components.

In 1926, Tatar's first Latin alphabet was introduced. Almost immediately, government linguists decided that it differed too much from the Latin alphabet that had been introduced for the Azeri language in 1923. In March 1927, the Yangalif ("New Alphabet") Society held a conference in Kazan during which the participants presented their cases for the need "to perfect" Tatar's alphabet and made a case for creating a common Latin alphabet.⁴⁵ Subsequently, the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkish Alphabet (VSTsKNTA) unified the country's Turkic alphabets into a single Latin orthographic system.⁴⁶ Although latinization rendered a generation of readers illiterate, the unified alphabet did not hinder communication across geographical regions. It represented the same sounds with the same characters in all the Soviet Union's Turkic languages, with only the slightest modifications made in local regional publications.

BIRLƏŞDIRILMIŞ JEMİ TÜRK ALFABASI

A a	B b	C c	Ç ç	D d	E e	Ə ə
А а	В в	С с	Ç ç	Д д	Е е	Ə ə
ا ا	ب ب	ج ج	چ چ	د د	ه ه	ه (هه)
F f	G g	Ğ ğ	H h	I i	J j	K k
ف ف	گ گ	گ گ	ه ه	ی ی	ج ج	ک ک
L l	M m	N n	Ŋ ŋ	O o	Ө ө	P p
ل ل	م م	ن ن	ڭ ڭ	و (اولی)	و (اولک)	پ پ
Q q	R r	S s	Ş ş	T t	U u	V v
ق ق	ر ر	س س	ش ش	ت ت	و (اوزون)	و (آو)
X x	Y y	Z z	Ž ž	b b		
خ خ	ی ی	ز ز	ژ ژ	ب ب		
خ (خ)	ی (ی)	ز (ز)	ژ (ژ)	ب (ب)		

29 рәс. Түркия телдәрендә берләштерелгән яңалыф алфавиты.
(„Стенографический отчёт Первого пленума ВЦИК ИТА“, М., 1927).

Figure 3.4. United Turkic Alphabet (*Yangalif*), 1927 (Kurbatov 1999)

However, a dispute soon broke out among several key Soviet linguists, including Zhirkov and Baudouin de Courtenay's student Yevgenii Polivanov, over what the relationship should be between written language and speech.⁴⁷ Several linguists thought that written language should mimic speech as closely as possible, while others opined that phonetic differences were not important as long as speakers didn't perceive them as meaningful. (That is, the differences weren't phonological.) The sides taken in this dispute reveal two characteristics of the development of Soviet nationalities. First, they foreshadow what Russian historian Yuri Slezkine aptly calls ethnic particularism—the division of people living in the former Soviet Union into ranked groups each seeking to promote the interests of their own nationality—which has made creating a common Latin alphabet in the post-Soviet period an untenable goal.⁴⁸ Second, they reveal a trend towards promoting Russian over other Soviet languages. Though Soviet linguists in the late 1920s–early 1930s created different orthographic systems for closely related Turkic languages, they quickly began to model their alphabets after features found in Russian. In order to understand the particularities of these models, it is necessary to have some familiarity with three traits common to Turkic languages—namely, phonemic patterning, vowel harmony, and agglutination.

First, Turkic languages possess [y]/[ž] sound alternation as part of their phonemic patterning. For example, the word for “no” can be either *yok* or *žok*, depending upon the dialect. Anatolian Turks say *yok*, while contemporary Kazakhs say *žok*. The Tatar literary word for “no” is *yuk*, but a single speaker may say *yuk*, *yok*, *žok*, or *žuk* over the course of a few sentences depending upon what feels good to say at a given moment, according to Fäüzia, a village-born, middle-aged schoolteacher.⁴⁹

However, when educated Tatars hear Bashkirs (a nationality whose titular republic lies just east of Tatarstan and whose cultural evolutionary ranking is lower than Tatars') say *yuk/yok* or *žuk/žok*, the choice of [y] or [ž] has significance.⁵⁰ From a Tatar-speaking perspective, a Bashkir saying *yuk/yok* is speaking Tatar, while if he or she says *žuk/žok*, the language is Bashkir. For example, when I visited Bashkortostan in June 2000, my Tatar friends—including Fäüzia—decided I should be interviewed on Bashkir radio. They took me to a radio station and introduced me to a Bashkir journalist who was eager to interview me. We went into the sound studio. As soon as the tape started rolling, the journalist, who up till then had been speaking something indistinguishable from Tatar as I knew it, altered her speech to say, *inter alia*, *žok* instead of *yok*. Afterwards, when Fäüzia recounted the story of this encounter to her mother

Nur *apa*, she stressed that the journalist switched from Tatar to Bashkir. However, when I asked Fäüzia what language Nur *apa* (who was one of Kazan's few Tatar language teachers during late socialism) was speaking when she says *žok* or *žuk*, Fäüzia asserted that the language is Tatar. Hearing [y]/[ž] variation as meaningful or not emerges from Soviet language codification processes in the 1920s–1930s.⁵¹

Thus, the dispute that began in 1927 concerned whether written forms should mimic spoken language or whether they should promote verbal hygiene by imposing standard literary forms—like [y] in place of [ž]. Verbal hygiene prevailed and Soviet linguists created a third Latin orthographic system for Tatar, which the All-Union Central Committee of the New Turkish Alphabet accepted at their 1929 Congress.⁵²

А а А а ا	Б б Б б ب	С с С с س	Ç ç Ç ç چ	Д д Д д د
Е е Е е ه	Ә ә Ә ә ا	Ф ф Ф ф ف	Г г Г г غ	О о О о و
Һ һ Һ һ ه	И и И и ي	Ј ј Ј ј (ج) ي	К к К к ك	Л л Л л ل
М м М м م	Н н Н н ن	Њ њ Њ њ ن	О о О о (ج) ي, (ك) ي	Ө ө Ө ө (ك) ي
П п П п پ	Қ қ Қ қ ق	Р р Р р ر	С с С с س	Ş ş Ş ş ش
У у У у (و) ي	Т т Т т ت	У у У у (ك) ي, (ج) ي	В в В в (ج) ي	Х х Х х خ
З з З з ز	З з З з ز	Б б Б б ب	бј бј бј бј ب	—

Figure 3.5. Tatar Alphabet based upon *Yangalif*, 1927, (Kurbatov 1999)

A second feature of Turkic languages common to all standardized versions, except Uzbek, is vowel harmony. Vowel harmony requires that all the vowels in any indigenous word are spoken completely in the back or completely in the front of the mouth. So, for example, *yuk* is back, while *mächit*—the word for “mosque”—is front. Vowel harmony becomes more apparent in longer words, often created through a third Turkic linguistic feature—agglutination. Agglutination requires that words that might be represented by phrases in English are built from roots using affixes. For

example, *yuk* means “no”; *yuklık* means “absence”; and *yuklıktan* would mean “due to the absence” of something. Similarly, while *māchit* means “mosque”; *māchitim* means “my mosque”; and *māchitimdā* means “in my mosque.” In all their forms these words adhere to vowel harmony and are thus pronounced either completely in the back or the front of one’s mouth.

Unlike the rules that govern Turkic vowel harmony, Russian vowels are either hard or soft. Also dissimilar from Turkic languages, Russian’s softness/hardness is not patterned onto entire words. Rather, it occurs idiosyncratically and requires memorization. When Tatar began to be written in Russian script, front vowels were represented as if they were soft (for example, я replaced ä), and back vowels as if they were hard. As a result, when present-day Tatar teachers explain Tatar vowel harmony, they speak of it as the Russian distinction between softness and hardness.⁵³

At the 1929 Congress, linguists S. Atnagulov and M. Fazlullin—both ethnic Tatars—announced, “The law of vowel harmony, a quality of the Tatar language, is a reactionary law and a conservative tendency.” Shortly thereafter, they declared that written Tatar would no longer mark vowel harmony. In a remark espousing Marr’s theory of language hybridization, Fazlullin gave the reason for taking this measure as follows:

In the future, languages will unite, that is, in N. Ia. Marr’s words, languages of different systems will take each other’s elements into themselves using the “crossing” path. As a result, whichever it turns out to be, only one language will remain in the world.⁵⁴

Marr proposed that agglutinative languages were at the clan stage, while inflected languages exist in class-based societies. Fazlullin’s statement demonstrates a new application of Marr’s ideas. Instead of allowing languages to develop through their purported evolutionary stages, they receive a push in the right direction.⁵⁵ Decreeing that the Tatar language be denuded of one of its fundamental features was supposed to accelerate its speakers along an imagined evolutionary trajectory into a class-based society.

Different from how linguists usually conceive of languages, Fazlullin’s theory does not include speakers and his fusing apparently proceeds without their interference.⁵⁶ Indeed, Soviet linguists treated languages as autonomous vehicles for progressive change and social engineering.⁵⁷ While this perception became deeply entrenched in the 1930s, Tatar-language archival materials demonstrate that it took hold as early as the late 1920s.⁵⁸

In 1933, Tatar's Latin alphabet was modified once again. The spellings of some words were changed so that they no longer followed the Turkic pattern of alternating consonant–vowel–consonant.⁵⁹ Instead of using writing to record speech, Tatar spelling began to imitate Russian orthographic conventions. Additionally, new spelling rules were introduced for words borrowed from Arabic and Farsi that marked them as foreign.⁶⁰ Marking loan words from “Muslim” languages as foreign implies that Islam is alien to Tatar culture and was clearly devised to bolster contemporaneous Soviet antireligious campaigns. Paradoxically, since the Soviet Union's collapse, Tatars often enunciate Arabic loanwords using hypercorrected pronunciation so that the words sound, in effect, more Arabic than Arabic. They consider this a way to get back to authentic Tatariness.

In 1937, the last change was made to Tatar's Latin alphabet. The letter [w] was added. The following year, without any discussion or debate, Stalin decreed that Tatar language should be written in Cyrillic. Historically, this decree coincided with the death of Soviet society's revolutionary tendencies.⁶¹ By 1941, 60 of the Soviet Union's 67 written languages had been cyrillicized.⁶²

In 1938 Fazlullin asserted that the goal of adopting Russian's alphabet was to change Tatar from an agglutinative to an inflected language like Russian.⁶³ He made quite clear that this signified a leap forward in cultural evolution:

As a result of taking the Russian alphabet in its entirety...the possibility of inserting the written system of an inflected language in some places is born for us, and it is necessary to insert it...The idea is that Tatar language is beginning to enter the inflected system from an agglutinative system. It should be required to make changes in the areas of orthography, phonetics, and morphology. This will clearly be a progressive step.⁶⁴

Xālif Kurbatov, a present-day Tatar historian and author of an extremely informative book on the history of Tatar orthography, comments with regards to Fazlullin's assertion, “having understood these words, [one sees] the alphabet project was not about Tatar language at all.” He continues:

Indeed...the [project's] creators held in their eye more the goal to change the native language into another language, to make the native language fit into the template of another language. They wished to change the Tatar language from an agglutinative language into an inflected language, that is, they relied upon N. Ia. Marr's theory according to which languages pass through stadial steps of growth.⁶⁵

Kurbatov concludes that cyrillicizing Tatar was simply a continuation of pre-revolutionary Russian missionary activities in the Middle Volga region, the intention of which, he asserts, was to russify the population.⁶⁶

Although six letters were added after 1939, Tatar's first Cyrillic alphabet did not contain any additional graphemes to mark Tatar sounds not found in Russian.⁶⁷ Fazlullin explained that this was because adding extra letters would require the production of special typewriters and cash registers. He asserted that if allowances were made for Tatar's phonology, the same words written in Russian and Tatar would be spelled differently.⁶⁸ Fazlullin argued that Tatars would make fewer mistakes writing Russian, if an unmodified Cyrillic alphabet were to represent the Tatar language.⁶⁹ Making faultless Russian the central concern in the question of how to write Tatar demonstrates a fundamental attitude shift. That is, by the late 1930s, the Soviet government's position was that knowledge of Tatar held value only insofar as it facilitated Russian's dominance.

In 1926, Yakovlev had declared that the languages of nationalities of the least developed type should "completely conform to the alphabet of the dominant nationality" to ease "transition to the language of the dominant nationality."⁷⁰ Applying his declaration to the situation in the 1930s signifies that writing Tatar in the Russian alphabet lowers the Tatar nation's status in Soviet hierarchical structures, and indeed, excludes all nationalities but Ukrainians, who were already writing in Cyrillic, from the category of economically and culturally dominant nations. It suggests that Tatars, along with other minorities previously granted their own alphabets, were expected to make the transition to Russian language.

Thus, a revolutionary program to develop the literary languages of the various ethnic groups living on Soviet territory was transformed into a policy for accelerating the cultural evolution of those ethnic groups. Language was equated with culture and Russian language and culture became increasingly represented as the most progressive and civilized, and, as such, the endpoint towards which non-Russian languages and their speakers should seek to evolve.

**А а Б б В в Г г Д д Е е Ё ё Ж ж З з И и Й й К к Л л М м
Н н О о П п Р р С с Т т У у Ф ф Х х Ц ц Ч ч Ш ш Щ щ
Ъ ъ Ы ы Ь ь Э э Ю ю Я я**

Figure 3.6. Tatar Cyrillic Alphabet, 1938

Although one of the long-term consequences of introducing Cyrillic alphabets, as well as Russian phonology, morphology, and syntax for Turkic languages, was to russify Turkic-speakers linguistically, these policies had another, equally important social effect.⁷¹ They divided speakers of closely related Turkic dialects orthographically. After 1938, the Soviet state used different Cyrillic alphabets, the letters of which appeared in dictionaries each in a unique alphabetical order, for Turkic language varieties spoken in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and so on. Indeed, the Cyrillic alphabets in use from 1939 until the Soviet Union’s collapse provided different spellings—not only for vowels, but also consonants—for words common to all of them. While representing vowels differently in related dialects may render it somewhat difficult for speakers of one dialect to read another dialect, changing the orthographic representation of consonants indisputably increases that difficulty.⁷²

Tatar Language	Uzbek Language	English Language
аяк [aiak]	oëk [oiok]	leg, foot
сәгать [sägat’]	соәт [soät]	hour, watch, clock

Figure 3.7. Orthographic Particularisms

The alphabet changes of the early Soviet period caused broad social change in three concrete ways. First, they were an important step in the creation of “unique languages,” which Stalin considered one of the criteria for nationhood. Second, they discouraged pan-Turkic connections across newly created borders.⁷³ Indeed, while some ex-Soviet Turkic-speakers communicate orally with members of other Soviet Turkic nationalities in the post-Soviet period, I have never met one who reads literature in another nationality’s language. And third, they denied members of minority nationalities access to their own written history, since they couldn’t read texts published in previously extant writing systems.

The Outlaw Alphabet

After 1939, these once hotly contested questions concerning orthography lay dormant until Gorbachev accelerated his policy of glasnost in the late 1980s. Since the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991, however, one of the

core independence projects in the various Turkic republics—including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tatarstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—has been the re-introduction of *Yangalif* (also called *latinitsa*). To this end, two international congresses were convened, the first in Ankara in 1990 and the second in Kazan in 1994. The goal of these meetings was to create a common Turkic alphabet so that Turkic-speakers of different nationalities would be able to read each other's publications. The model that representatives from the Soviet Union took home from the congress in Ankara closely resembled the alphabet used for Anatolian Turkish. However, once the Soviet linguists returned to their respective republics, they each modified the common alphabet to accommodate sounds unique to their own native language. The desire to maintain sound particularities in writing suggests that the linguists consider orthographic particularism to represent ethnic difference. The existence of a tension between this desire and the contrary tendency to embrace pan-Turkic linguistic commonalities makes it evident that Soviet language policies effected a real transformation with regards to creating national divisions among the USSR's Turkic-speakers.

Aa Bb Cc Çç Dd Ee Ff Gg Ğğ Hh Iı İi Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Öö Pp Rr Ss Şş Tt Uu Üü Vv Yy Zz

Figure 3.8. The Turkish Alphabet since 1926

Besides the value of being able to communicate in written form with speakers of similar dialects without having to revert to Russian, Tatar-speakers cite other benefits to adopting a Latin script. These include greater access to globalized computer technologies and improved spoken ability by children studying Tatar, who, they believe, will no longer pronounce Tatar texts as if they were reading Russian. My research reveals that pronouncing Tatar as if it were Russian is indeed widespread among urban school children. Representing Tatar in an alphabet other than Cyrillic may encourage children to read texts according to a phonological system that is not based on Russian. However, results would still depend on the quality of education.⁷⁴

Moreover, the new latinized version of Tatar contains three specialized graphemes—for example, [ə] for front [a]—which do not appear on a standard Latin keyboard.⁷⁵ This suggests that the reasons for adopting *latinitsa* are grounded as much in the ideological as in the quotidian.

In February 2000, I attended the final day of a three-day conference on Tatar-language education at one of Kazan's leading cultural institutes. The entire conference was conducted in the Tatar language and I recognized both at the podium and in the audience many people I knew as key Tatar nation-builders. They were university professors, textbook writers, school administrators, and teachers. I was the only non-Tatar there. The conference took place within a Tatar discursive world impermeable to Russian monolinguals.

The air in the auditorium where we all sat in attendance was warm and close. As I listened to one lecture after another, I noticed that many of my fellow attendees took turns dozing off. Others passed notes to each other. The scene reminded me of Yurchak's description of Communist Party meetings in the late Soviet period, where Komsomol leaders would express their ideological apathy by engaging in other activities, such as reading books held in their laps out of view of the speakers.⁷⁶ But, these people weren't apathetic—they may have been bored, but the ones I knew personally worked doggedly to improve the standards of Tatar education.

During the course of the afternoon, two prominent Tatar nation-builders expounded profoundly ideological reasons for wanting to switch to Latin script. The first of these, a history professor at Kazan State University, proclaimed from the stage that Russians had no ideology and no concept of democracy. He asserted that to attain an "American-European" standard, Tatar language needed a Latin script, for, he claimed, "Russian-Slavic" sorts of ideas are expressed in Cyrillic. The professor then spoke of a single Turkish people, saying that, although pan-Germanism and pan-Slavism are acceptable propositions, pan-Turkism is considered inherently bad.⁷⁷ "Since," he continued, "there is a Turkish people, there must also be a Turkish standard, which, unlike Cyrillic, would be the people's standard."⁷⁸ A second nation-builder, the linguist involved in creating the Tatar-Russian dictionary currently in use, asserted that the policy of writing Tatar in a Cyrillic alphabet had been part of an effort to absorb Tatars into the Russian nation. He perceived Cyrillic's introduction as part of a plan to destroy a people by turning two nations into one. Both nation-builders reiterated the mid-1920s ideology according to which alphabets are supposed to indicate entire systems of cultural organization. However, each did so in a different way. The professor argued for distancing Tatars from Russian-Slavic culture by switching to an orthographic system he equated with America, Europe, and all Turks. The linguist, by contrast, contended that Latin script is required to prevent the continuation of Tatar cultural genocide, as Tatar-speakers often call it.

№	Yazılışı		Ukılışı
1.	A	a	A
2.	Ə	ə	Ə
3.	B	b	Be
4.	C	c	Ce
5.	Ç	ç	Çe
6.	D	d	De
7.	E	e	E
8.	F	f	Ff
9.	G	g	Ge
10.	Ğ	ğ	Ğı
11.	H	h	He
12.	I	ı	I
13.	İ	i	İ
14.	J	j	J
15.	K	k	Ke
16.	Q	q	Qa
17.	L	l	El
18.	M	m	Em
19.	N	n	En
20.	Ŋ	ŋ	En
21.	O	o	O
22.	Ө	ө	Ө
23.	P	p	Pe
24.	R	r	Re
25.	S	s	Es
26.	Ş	ş	Şa
27.	T	t	Te
28.	U	u	U
29.	Ü	ü	Ü
30.	V	v	Ve
31.	W	w	Wı
32.	X	x	Xa
33.	Y	y	Y
34.	Z	z	Ze

Figure 3.9. Tatar's Latin Alphabet, Perfected *Yangalif*, 1999

The Tatar linguists who favored adopting *latinitsa* held different opinions about what letters that alphabet should contain. I interviewed one of them, a well-known senior linguist, in December 2000. During the interview, which only concerned linguistic matters, he became very nervous, indicating at one point that someone was eavesdropping at the door to his office. We opened it to find one of his graduate students standing there. The linguist explained to me that there had been a major rift among the members of The Committee to Re-introduce *Latinitsa* and it had split into two factions. One faction, which the aforementioned Kurbatov supported, wished to re-introduce the 1920s *Yangalif* alphabet. The other faction—his own—wished to update or “perfect” *Yangalif*, in part by introducing Turkish letters to represent sounds that had been denoted by Russian soft signs in the 1920s Latin script. By way of criticism of the former position, the linguist pointed out that soft signs cannot be represented on a Latin computer keyboard (which likewise holds true for the three special letters he advocated including). The linguist added that proponents of perfecting *Yangalif* had been

accused of being Turkish spies. Despite these accusations, the script eventually adopted was Perfected *Yangalif*. It contains Turkish letters and an altogether new letter, while retaining two modified Cyrillic graphemes.

Following Crimean Tatars in Ukraine, and the Republics of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, in September 1999 Tatarstan's President Mintimir Shaimiev finally signed into law the long-debated Latin alphabet for the Tatar language. Adopting Perfected *Yangalif* immediately sparked a vociferous negative reaction from Moscow, most apparent in disparaging press coverage of Tatarstan's latinization project.

A September 1999 article published in the Moscow newspaper *Izvestiya* provides a quintessential example of Russian media coverage of the issue. The article's title—"Iazychniki: 'Iazykovaia reforma' zadumannaia vlastiami Kazani, mozhет possorit' russkikh i tatar"—is a play on words. Literally translated, it means "Heathens: The 'language reform' thought up by the authorities in Kazan may make Russians and Tatars quarrel." Used as a pun here on the Russian word for language—*язык*, "*язычник*" means both "heathen" and "language person," thus implying that people who focus on language questions are barbaric. The article's byline lists Gayaz Alimov, a staff journalist who regularly reports on foreign affairs (and whose Arabic-derived Tatar name means "Lucid Scholar"), and Maksim Iusin, *Izvestiya's* Editor of International Affairs. Its co-authoring by an apparent Tatar and an apparent Russian both symbolizes ethnic solidarity and implies that negative reactions to latinization are not the product of Russian nationalism.

Even so, the genre of argument Alimov and Iusin adopt is not uncommon among Russian nationalists. Inverting the central ideology from the USSR's 1920s state-formation period, which asserts that every nation has a unique language, they claim that a group not in complete possession of a national language cannot be considered a nation. Moreover, they imply, if people do not think in their national language and speak it fluently, then any claims they make on the basis of nationhood are inauthentic machinations intended to manipulate politics and power hierarchies to their advantage. This attitude is part of the fabric of everyday life, as when Russians living in Kazan would confide to me that Tatars do not speak or think in Tatar. At such moments, they either pointedly implied or stated outright that language promotion is pure nationalism and nothing more than an attempt to supplant Russians from their rightful positions of power.

Alimov and Iusin's mocking derision of Tatarstan's latinization campaign demonstrates how debates about alphabet reform frequently centralize minutiae marginal to the problems associated with reform, which

approach makes alphabet reform appear a petty endeavor. Thus, Alimov and Iusin claim that there are Tatars who have adopted the Russian word for yes [*da*] in place of the Tatar “*äie*” and assert that writing “*da*” in Latin letters would be absurd. The absurdity of writing *da* in Latin is treated as if it were self-evident, unsupported by linguistic or other evidence. More to the point, their claim is unfounded.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Alimov and Iusin’s article takes as its premise the notion that Tatar language is so corrupted, and ethnic Tatars are so linguistically russified, that they have given up core words, such as that for “yes.” Consequently, their train of logic implies, no authentic Tatar language spoken by authentic Tatars exists. Rather, people seeking language reform are insincere in their aims. They just want to play politics, and dangerous, nationalist politics at that.

Negative reactions to Tatarstan’s latinization campaign are not confined to the Russian press. In December 2000, the Russian Duma passed an anti-latinization measure. The measure stated that Tatarstan’s adoption of a Latin script was a threat to Russian national security and banned other constituents of the Russian Federation (such as Bashkortostan, where 24% of the population is ethnic Tatar) from using Latin script to print Tatar.⁸⁰ Banning the use of Latin script among Tatars living outside of Tatarstan creates a difficult situation for Tatarstan nation-builders. Since only 1.5 million of Russia’s seven million Tatars live in Tatarstan, part of nation-builders’ vision includes promoting Tatar language and culture for Tatars residing beyond Tatarstan’s borders. Consequently, proceeding with alphabet reform within Tatarstan could sever communication between Tatarstan Tatars and external Tatars.

Despite opposition, the Tatarstan government doggedly persisted in its efforts to latinize: beginning with the 2000–2001 school year, sixty schools began to teach Perfected *Yangalif* to their pupils. Tatarstan’s Ministry of Education reported that students had no difficulty in mastering Tatar’s Latin script and they “demonstrated a growing interest in their [Tatar] lessons in general.”⁸¹ The Ministry of Education’s goal was to effect complete latinization of Tatar over the course of the next ten years.

In 2000, before the Latin alphabet was adopted, several Tatar teachers I knew who were working in Kazan schools expressed opposition to it. For example, one teacher, Hayat *apa*, worried that Latin would impede children’s acquisition of Tatar because it would add an additional step to the learning process. However, after she began teaching the new script, she reported that her fears had been unfounded. A second teacher, who worked at Kazan’s Jewish School, told me that she considered the re-introduction of Latin script a project devised by the enemies of Tatar lan-

guage. She was concerned that changing Tatar's alphabet would render yet another generation of Tatars illiterate and further complicate her efforts to arouse interest in Tatar language among her pupils. The young teacher's concern emerged from her personal experience of the written communication barrier that existed between herself, as someone literate in Tatar in Cyrillic, and her grandmother, who had been schooled in Latin in the 1920s.

After 9/11, members of Russia's government began to frame their objection to Tatar's Latin script as an Islamic threat.⁸² For example, in March 2002 Russian Duma Deputy Sergei Shashurin was quoted in a Radio Liberty Daily Review from Tatarstan as having said the following:

"Trying to switch the Tatar language to Latin is the same thing as riding donkeys in Afghanistan"...the switchover would "threaten Russia's national security and integrity via Turkish expansion." [S]cript reform would lead Tatarstan to "what we have now in Afghanistan, thanks to the Taliban."⁸³

Spinning the alphabet debate as a threat to Russian national security has successfully shifted its emphasis from one in which opponents treat linguistic pluralism as superfluous to a much more alarming anti-Muslim stance. Some Tatar intellectuals told me in private that they find this reframing of the orthographic debate reminiscent of Stalinist-period paranoia about the enemy within, which resulted in millions of Soviets losing their lives. In the Russian-language mass media, in interviews with me, and in everyday conversations, many Tatar-speakers attempted to assuage the fears of those who object to latinization by professing that their cultural integration into Russian linguistic space is too total to be dismantled by the simple act of writing their native language in a different alphabet. To no avail.

Beginning in spring 2002 a heated debate arose in the Russian Duma about an amendment to the federal law on languages that would prevent languages spoken in Russia from being written in anything other than the Russian alphabet. As a Tatarstan nation-builder and Russian Duma Deputy Fändäs Safiullin accurately pointed out, this measure would in effect outlaw the six additional letters created for Cyrillic Tatar subsequent to 1939.⁸⁴ The slippage in Duma discussions between mention of "Russian" script and the eventual adoption of a law about Cyrillic provides insight into Russian imperialist attitudes towards non-Russian ethnic minorities. It exposes an underlying assumption that Russian language and Russian script should suffice for communication.



Figure 3.10. Moscow Street Sign in Latin Script, 2006

On December 12, 2002, Putin signed a law prohibiting the writing of Russian's languages in any script not based on Cyrillic.⁸⁵ The law, which required Tatarstan to desist from teaching Tatar in Latin by December 2003, incited outrage from some Tatar quarters. However, just as Tatarstan people adopt various positions towards other political questions, not all Tatars necessarily support *latinitsa*.

Three stories Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty published in December 2002 about attitudes towards the new law among Tatars living in Bashkortostan illustrate this. In one, Supreme Mufti of Russia Talgat Tajetdin, who is stationed in Bashkortostan's capital Ufa, called upon Putin to sign the Cyrillic-only law, stating that "changing the language's script in one of Russia's entities would irreparably harm the entire Tatar national culture, the community of the country's peoples, and would cause distrust and alienation in their relations." As the Tatarstan newspaper *Vremya novostei* pointed out, Tajetdin was trying to curry favor with Putin by representing himself as less radical than other Muslims, such as those on Tatarstan's Muslim Religious Board, which favors latinization.⁸⁶

In addition, a group of people claiming to represent Bashkortostan's Tatars sent a collective letter to Putin in which they wrote:

Changing our writing will result in separating the entire Tatar people, including those living in Tatarstan, from Russian culture and its invaluable heritage. Apart from this, much money will be spent on new textbooks, developing methods of teaching, translation of books, training teachers, and finally, changing street signs.⁸⁷

Similar to Fazlullin's objections in 1938 to adapting Russian's Cyrillic alphabet to accommodate Tatar phonology, these post-Soviet period writers invoke the logistical difficulties of introducing Perfected *Yangalif*.

However, since the Russian economy is now subject to market forces, reference to logistics is framed in terms of financial expense, instead of as complications in factory production.

Six days after these two stories appeared, another Bashkortostan Tatar, likewise claiming to represent his community, contradicted both Tajetdin's statements and those made in the collective letter. Elfir Sakaev, Deputy Chairman of Bashkortostan's Tatar National-Cultural Autonomy, stated that:

[His organization] was indignant about the Russian media's campaign against Tatarstan's transition to a Latin-based script and was surprised by the recent message from Telget [sic] Tajetdin to Russian President Putin...Only Tatars, and not some Muslim leaders or Russian politicians, should decide on how to express their native language.⁸⁸

These published controversies over the reintroduction of a Latin alphabet for Tatar have successfully projected significant rifts between Tatars and Russians and among different groups of Tatars, regardless of whether or not those rifts exist outside the sphere of mass media. The controversies demonstrate the extent to which opinions which profess to be about alphabets in fact concern wholly different matters. During a period of political instability not experienced in Russia since the 1920s, how the minority nationalities choose to write their national languages has assumed great significance. This is because ethnic Russians perceive writing in *latinitsa* as a rejection of the idea of a Russian state in which ethnic Russians maintain cultural and political hegemony. And, indeed, it is.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have traced the ways in which Soviet languages and nations became ordered in a hierarchy of cultural evolutionary stages of development and how this hierarchy eventually caused an alphabet to become outlawed. Studying language codification in the USSR demonstrates the negotiation inherent in creating standardized systems of linguistic notation and indicates how these systems become deeply politicized in state societies.

Standardization was one of several quite successful means for creating discrete nationalities out of Russian Muslims. These effects are evident from the ways post-Soviet Turkic intellectuals express a desire to maintain their national uniqueness by retaining the features particular to their na-

tional alphabets. The increasing russification of minority languages during the Soviet state-building period—most pointedly, the speedy movement from descriptions of their particularities to prescriptive measures to make them more like Russian—is part of a colonial policy, which many Tatar intellectuals perceive as a continuation of Russian imperialist aspirations dating back to the 16th century. What they don't perceive as colonialism, by and large, is how Soviet policies fragmented knowledge about minority peoples. Thus, while former Soviets are familiar with the sanctioned (and generally superficial) information about each other once transmitted via official channels, they don't tend to think comparatively about Soviet rule, often perceiving what they suffered as the sole such occurrence. While foreign scholars are beginning to piece together inclusive views of Soviet nationalities policies and their effects, the results of this research have not been shared with its subjects and so, *inter alia*, former Soviets remain largely ignorant of the commonalities in their lived experiences.⁸⁹ At least as salient an effect upon minority nationalities is how alphabet changes make impossible acquiring familiarity with texts created in previous writing systems and render even highly literate nations, such as Tatars, people without history, and therefore more prone to social atomization and easier to control.⁹⁰

The alphabets government linguists created for Tatar language in the 1920s–1930s at first implicitly and then explicitly adopted Russian language as the standard against which Tatar was measured. Russian likewise became the standard for the vast majority of Soviet minority languages. It remains the standard against which people in Russia define the Tatar language in the early 21st century.

At least three competing attitudes towards the re-introduction of a Latin alphabet for Tatar language have emerged since the early 1990s. For some Tatar nation-builders the recreation of a common Latin script symbolizes an end to colonial isolation through the rejection of a writing system decreed by fiat. Ending Tatars' isolation entails movement towards other Turkic-speaking people, including the Turks of Turkey, and facilitating their entry into the world of globalized computer communications. Other nation-builders see in the creation of a common Latin alphabet the loss of the Tatar nation's uniqueness, which signifies a notable shift from their predecessors' attitudes in the 1920s. How Tatars in other regions and Russian-identified people—whether they are Tatars who speak Russian exclusively or ethnic Russians—perceive latinization likewise varies. However, many of them consider Tatar's Latin alphabet a treacherous act of rejection and a threat to Russian national security.

How did these profound divisions in how Russian citizens perceive the world come into being? In the next chapter I begin to answer this question by describing in depth the cultural perspective from which Tatar-speakers have come to view the world in the post-Soviet period.

Notes

- 1 See Jaffe (1996) and Schieffelin (1998) for similar analyses of the political implications of alphabets, in Corsica and Haiti, respectively.
- 2 Advancing national minorities was part of a policy called *nativization*, which Martin (2001) calls “affirmative action.” See also Hirsch (2005). For more on the relation between nativization and language planning, see Smith (1993) and (1998), who argues that the pendulum shift from nativization to russification wasn’t as dramatic as it is frequently depicted. My evidence for Tatar does not support this argument, rather fitting better with the positions taken by Kreindler (1982, 1985, 1989), Lewis (1972), and Silver (1974a).
- 3 After 1932 policies more frequently structured the practice of ethnography than the other way around (Slezkine 1994b). Lewis Henry Morgan was a 19th-century American cultural anthropologist specializing in Iroquois Indians, who proposed—like other evolutionists of the period—that cultures advanced through universal evolutionary stages from savagery through barbarism to civilization. Savagery is roughly equated with economies organized around hunting and gathering, barbarism with sedentary populations usually practicing some food production and living in villages, while civilization implies the existence of cities. Marx and Engels were enamored of Morgan, and Engels incorporated Morgan’s theories in his 1884 book, *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*.
- 4 Lenin (1914); Martin (2001).
- 5 Kirkwood (1989); Kreindler (1989); Lewis (1972). Beyond all of its inaccurate essentialist presumptions, this approach leaves no room for the children of mixed marriages, as they are called in the Soviet context.
- 6 Chikobaeva (1950: 15); Slezkine (1994b: 250–252). Marr’s method emerges from earlier theories of cultural evolution that treat human development teleologically.
- 7 See, for example, Austin (1992) on Karelian and Faller (2000) on Tatar.
- 8 The chart is adapted from Yakovlev (1926: 36–37).
- 9 Yakovlev’s presumption is contraindicated by the fact that at the turn of the 21st century when half (approximately 5,000) of the world’s languages are in danger of extinction, over half the world’s population is nonetheless bilingual.
- 10 Morgan’s purported stages of development (savagery—barbarism—civilization) easily became conflated into non-urban (i.e., backwards) and urban (i.e., modern). Perceiving the differences between urban and rural as absolute is not unique to Soviet state-building. See Williams (1973) for example.
- 11 Schamiloglu (2001) views the Soviet Union as a continuation of the Russian Empire insofar as central government policies oppressed non-Russian peoples.
- 12 Published the following year under the title *Marxism and Linguistics* in the United States.

- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Stalin (1950a: 76).
- 15 For example Chikobaeva (1950: 12) writes about Marrism thus, “Vocal speech, according to N. Ya. Marr, originated not for purposes of communication (people spoke with their hands!), but as a “labor-magic” activity [50–500 thousand years ago]; there are only four primary words or elements; they were in the possession of medicine men, and even these used them not as a means of communication with people...but...with a totem... It turns out that vocal speech, the property of medicine men, originated in a class-differentiated environment...as an instrument of class struggle.”
- 16 For Stalin a language—as opposed to a class dialect—has its own basic lexical fund and grammar, and exists under the economic conditions necessary for evolution into an independent national language, the speakers of which therefore have the potential to evolve into nations (Stalin 1950c: 96).
- 17 Stalin (1950a: 74).
- 18 Ibid., 71.
- 19 Stalin (1950c: 97; 1950a: 75).
- 20 Stalin (1950c: 98).
- 21 Kreindler (1989: 53, 56).
- 22 See Artiunov (1978), for an example of the former and Grant (1983) and Lewis (1972) as examples of the latter.
- 23 Kreindler (1989).
- 24 Maksimov (1990: 64).
- 25 Maksimov’s implies that Tatar semantic fields have become less narrow due to Russian influence, for the first “calques” cited by Maksimov are in fact terminological trappings of Soviet propaganda—bourgeoisie, proletariat, soviet, Party, and democracy, while the second ones include true calques from Russian, for example *üzeshçenlek* (self-work orientedness) for *samodejatel’nost’* (self-activeness; viz. independent activity). Moreover, the Tatar word collocations he lists as representing the evolution of semantic fields also indicate an apparent accommodation of Soviet concepts, such as *syjnfyj köräsh* from *politicheskaja bor’ba* [political struggle]. Maksimov’s argument here is misleading in a number of ways: in the above case he mistranslates *syjnfyj* [class or stratum] as *politicheskaja* [political]; in three examples his collocations are grammatically incorrect in that modified nouns are not appropriately affixed; and two of his examples employ Ottoman adjectival forms—*syjnfyi* and *ädäbi* [literary]—not associated with modernized Turkic dialects. The use of Ottoman forms may or may not mean that the broadening of semantic fields Maksimov describes predates Sovietization, but it does sow a seed of skepticism regarding whether these calques are recent inventions.
- 26 For example, Maksimov wants to introduce the Russian word *politik* to replace the already existing *säyasät*, which was borrowed from Arabic prior to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.
- 27 Sagdeeva (1990: 127).
- 28 Sagdeeva objects to the following sentence on the grounds that it suffers from “interference” from Russian, “*Bu kyz bik kul’turaly kienä*,” meaning “This girl is very *culturedly* dressed.” Sagdeeva underlines the word *kul’turaly* to indicate that it represents interference from Russian (Ibid., p. 128). *Kul’turaly* is composed of the Russian word *kul’tura* and the Turkic suffix [ly], which creates adjectives or adverbs, and here approximates the Russian word “kul’turno.”

- 29 See my article, Faller (2000), for a more detailed description of prescriptive grammars in the early 1990s. As Bilaniuk (2005) points out, ideologies of linguistic purism, such as the one espoused by Sagdeeva, are a common characteristic of asymmetrical language contact situations, and not particular to the post-Soviet context.
- 30 Lenin (1970). This shift was likewise supported by most Turkic intellectuals in the service of the Soviet system (Lewin 1994; Slezkine 1994b), who were all *jadids* (modernizers). See Smith (1998) for more on Lenin's attitude towards latinization, as well as a more detailed discussion of the various aspects of the alphabet debates.
- 31 Turkic-speakers who did not convert to Islam, for example, Tuvans and Yakuts, never adopted an Arabic writing system.
- 32 In anthropology, the study of societies emerged historically in England, while the study of cultures was initially an American tradition. Marx, Engels, and their intellectual offspring based their evolutionary schema on the American ethnologist Lewis Henry Morgan, as noted above. Thus, even though much of the evolution discussed in this chapter pertains to the social, I will use the term "cultural" throughout.
- 33 No scholar thus far has analyzed Soviet orthographic reforms to present the big picture of alphabet reform and its effects.
- 34 Zhirkov (1926: 20).
- 35 Pavlovich (1926).
- 36 This orthographic ideology also governed the adoption of a Latin script in the Republic of Turkey around the same time. See Lewis (1999).
- 37 Zhirkov (1926: 21). Heartfelt thanks to my dear friend Maksim Kolopotin for his most insightful exegesis of what Byzantine politics means. He explained it "means simply corruption, patriarchy, intrigues, cruelty, cunning, protectionism—everything typical of medieval Byzantine Empire and its heir, the Russian Monarchy (the self-proclaimed Third Rome), esp. in XVI–XVII centuries."
- 38 Kurbatov (1999).
- 39 Evidence of dissent comes from one contributor to the government-sanctioned volume, *The Battle for a New Turkic Alphabet*. Broydo, Deputy Director of the Commissariat for Nationalities in the early 1920s, attempted to refute the commonly asserted ideology equating writing with political, economic, and belief systems. Broydo expresses his opinion concisely, "And no matter how much Chechen children are taught Latin script, not a single one of them, under that [single] circumstance, comes closer to European culture and her literary treasures..." (1926: 40). Furthermore, Broydo discounts claims that Arabic is inherently more difficult to learn than Latin, asserting that difficulties in acquiring Arabic script could be obviated by improving teaching methods.
- 40 Lenin (1970).
- 41 Pavlovich (1926).
- 42 Zhirkov (1926).
- 43 Agamaly-Ogly (1926: 14); Ibrahimov in Kurbatov (1999).
- 44 Broydo (1926); Crisp (1989).
- 45 During the following school year, 1927–28, a latinized Tatar began to be taught in technical and secondary schools. In 1928–29, Latin was introduced into schools at all levels.
- 46 Kurbatov (1999).
- 47 See Smith (1993) for more on the split between linguists who supported the phonetic over the phonological principle. Polivanov was also a famous Orientalist in his own

- right and a prominent member of the Prague School of Linguists, who died in 1938. For more on the Prague School, see Steiner (1982) and Vacheck (2003).
- 48 Slezkine (1994a).
- 49 My observation is that the [ž] allophone sometimes, but not necessarily, indicates a more emphatic “no.”
- 50 In other words, it possesses phonemic significance.
- 51 Schafer (1995).
- 52 For more on the concept of verbal hygiene, see Cameron’s (1995) book by that name.
- 53 Native speakers do adhere to front-back oppositions in speech, even though their metalinguistic terminology for describing vowel harmony models itself on Russian’s grammatical system.
- 54 Kurbatov (1999: 97).
- 55 Alpatov (1991).
- 56 Research by American sociolinguist William Labov (1966) on how lower middle class people try to adopt upper class linguistic features, in which he traced the source of larger linguistic changes to changes in the speech patterns of individual speakers, provides an example of how linguists generally conceive of languages.
- 57 Other research on Soviet minority languages demonstrates that this was the general attitude during this period (Austin 1992); (King 1999); (Lemon 1991, 2002).
- 58 I would argue, contrary to the generally received interpretations of Marr’s ideas, that there were elements of both description and prescription throughout the whole Soviet period, but that the latter became progressively stronger over time. A close reading of Marr’s 1931 *Iazyk i myshlenie* [Language and thought] reveals that how the ways he locates agency may allow for a growing role for prescription in Soviet linguistics. It is clear from Marr’s writing that language is considered to be a vehicle for social change. For example, he argues that semantic inversions occur on their own from one generation to the next. However, Marr also seems to locate agency among linguists. For, he opposes imperialist, missionizing linguists to communism-building linguists and implies that linguists can affect the linguistic development depending upon the politics that motivate their science. In addition to this, contrary to how he is usually understood, Marr seems to locate some agency in speakers’ minds. For example, Marr considers it acceptable that speakers continue to use the Russian word for thank you, *spasibo*, which literally means “God save” or the more explicit *slava bogu* [glory to God], despite the Soviet Union’s official policy of godlessness, as long as those speakers are not literal-minded. That is to say, it is acceptable for speakers to invoke God as long as they do not mean it (1977[1931]).
- 59 For example, *kübäräk* which means “more,” came to be spelled *kübräk*.
- 60 Kärimullin (1997). Iskhakov (2005: 81–84) sees this as a continuation of a process begun in the 19th century to purify Tatar language of Arabic and Persian terms in order to make the literary language more closely resemble speech.
- 61 These revolutionary tendencies included not only anti-imperialist improvements in the lives of subject peoples, but also with regards to women’s rights. See Buchli (2000); Fitzpatrick (1999); Kiar and Naiman (2006).
- 62 Armenian, Georgian, the three Baltic languages (Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian), Yiddish, and Abkhazian were the seven languages not cyrillicized (Dowler 2001). Printing in Romani, which was assigned an alphabet only in 1926, and in many other languages spoken by “small peoples” virtually ceased in the mid-1930s (Lemon 2000).

- 63 Attempts were likewise made to change other Soviet languages so that they more closely resembled Russian. See Austin (1992) for a careful description of how Soviet policies caused the death of the Karelian language.
- 64 Fazlullin [1938] in Kurbatov (1999: 110).
- 65 Kurbatov (1999: 110–111).
- 66 This perspective is soundly supported by Geraci (2001).
- 67 Tatar's original Cyrillic alphabet did not mark sounds particular to Tatar otherwise, for example through introducing doubled letters or diacritics into the writing system.
- 68 Kurbatov (1999: 109).
- 69 Kärimullin (1997: 17).
- 70 Yakovlev (1926: 36–37).
- 71 See Faller (2000) for more on Soviet intellectuals' attitudes towards the syntactic and morphological russification of Tatar language.
- 72 This difficulty is compounded by lexical differentiation between Turkic languages, also a product of language planning.
- 73 Stalin (1950a, 1950b); Schafer (1995). As is clear from the implicit argument presented by Maksimov and Sagdeeva, as well as Fazlullin's statements, orthographic modifications were but one of the means used to turn "Törki til"—the Turkish language—of the pre-Soviet period into discrete national languages.
- 74 By and large, all but the most privileged former Soviets, who have access to better quality teaching resources than most, pronounce non-native languages according to Russian's sound system.
- 75 I transliterate front [a] as ä.
- 76 See Yurchak (1997). Like many statements scholars make about the Russia of Moscow or St. Petersburg, this one doesn't hold true for Tatarstan.
- 77 I am translating the word *törki* as Turkish.
- 78 In contemporary Russia "*standart*" is usually used to mean economic standard or standard of living, as in apartment rental notices for units that meet European standards. Here it seems as if the speaker is conflating having a linguistic standard with having a higher standard of living.
- 79 My research on code-switching among bilingual Tatar-Russian speakers demonstrates that some speakers occasionally insert "*da*" in their speech, which they front-pronounce as "*dä*," but those speakers add *dä* without discarding "*äie*," and may in fact be speaking Russian at such moments. Tatar-speakers thus have tatarized the Russian word for "yes" by modifying its phonology and enriched their linguistic repertoire by doing so. See Woolard (1998) for evidence that it is not always possible to discern which language a bilingual is speaking. For a thorough overview of code-switching among bilingual speakers, see Gumperz (1982).
- 80 Iskhakov (2001).
- 81 RFE/RL Tatar-Bashkir Service, 29 May 2002.
- 82 September 11, 2001 was the date Islamic terrorists destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York by flying passenger planes into them. The date marks the beginning of US President George W. Bush's "War on Terror" with McCarthyist overtones—used to marginalize Muslims the world over by accusing them of terrorist leanings based upon their religion.
- 83 RFE/RL Daily Review, 13 March 2002.
- 84 Devlet (2009) notes that the law banning Latin script inadvertently affected Karelians.

85 The text of the law can be read at <http://wbase.duma.gov.ru/ntc/vdoc.asp?kl=11635>.

86 RFE/RL Tatar-Bashkir Service, 10 December 2002.

87 Ibid.

88 RFE/RL Tatar-Bashkir Service, 16 December 2002.

89 The Russia-based journal *Ab Imperio* does publish research that addresses these commonalities. However, no one I met while doing fieldwork, other than the two editors living in Kazan, mentioned the journal's existence.

90 *Europe and the People Without History* is a seminal work by anthropologist Eric Wolf that describes how European colonialism represented those it colonized as people without history.

CHAPTER 4

CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

“Before, there was one language—the Russian language. Before, there was Soviet history. Now what kind of history is there?”

Äminä *xanym*, Kazan, 8 June 1998

Äminä *xanym* is a working-class *käräshen* (Christian) Tatar pensioner married to a Muslim. She gave up speaking Tatar in early adulthood in part because her son used to chide her for “saying curse words”—a Russian speech genre taboo for women. Her statement above reflects attitudes common among Tatarstan people and inhabitants of provincial Russia. She misses the Soviet days when there was stability and enough to eat. She is angry at Americans for ruining her life and she hates the shitbag democrats [*srannye demokraty*] in the Russian government for their inability to provide for the people.

Äminä *xanym*’s statement reveals that, for many former Soviets, Russian is the Soviet language. Moreover, her words lay bare how language and history are intricately intertwined as symbolic repositories of meaning integral to how people understand their national identities. They demonstrate that even working-class ex-Soviets are self-reflexive about this relationship and cognizant of the fact that they look to these icons of national identity for clues to understanding their place in the world.

Äminä *xanym* sees no use for Tatar national politics, viewing them as chicanery that unnecessarily alienates Russians. She supported Vladimir Putin because she believed his iron-fistedness would bring social order and return Russia’s dignity. From her working-class perspective, Äminä *xanym*’s obduracy is as logical as it is prevalent. Attitudes like hers were precisely what the Tatarstan government would have had to change for sovereignty to enjoy enduring popularity.

In 1998, when I arrived in Kazan, sovereignty was generally unpopular among Russian-speakers. Its lack of popularity was part of a general mood of cynicism in Russia resulting from the 1997 economic collapse, in which large numbers of people suddenly lost their carefully accumulated

savings. Russian-speakers expressed their discontent with Tatarstan nation-building variously: by speaking over Tatar-language activities, as with the Russian woman who sabotaged the interview mentioned in Chapter 1, by welcoming Putin's ascension to power for the "order" it would bring, by employing orientalist tropes to depict Muslims as authoritarian or simple-minded, or through passive aggressive behaviors, such as not forwarding subscription requests for Tatar-language publications. At best, Russian-speakers have a complicated relationship to Tatar cultural difference. On the one hand, out of a kind of imperialist politeness they often overlook any dissimilarity from themselves, unless discussing the magnanimity of Tatar hospitality. On the other, they can sometimes assert that Muslims engage in the worst kinds of barbaric behavior.

Even if Russian-speakers had wholeheartedly embraced Tatarstan sovereignty and everything it entailed, it couldn't have succeeded, for the simple reason that Tatarstan is part of the Russian Federation and hence, victim to the imperial arbitrariness of Russia's rule. For Russia to release Tatarstan a general breakdown in the country's infrastructure involving widespread violence would have to occur. Having observed with their own eyes the raw discord and life-taking hostilities that overwhelmed numerous other ex-Soviet regions during the USSR's disintegration, Tatarstan people, with the exception of a few extremists, only wish to lessen the chaos that they and their neighbors endure. In spite of the futility of attaining independence—apparent since Tatarstan President Mintimir Shaimiev signed a power-sharing treaty with Boris Yeltsin in 1994—Tatar nation-builders have persisted in trying to advance their claims to Lenin's principle of self-determination, slippery in meaning even in the 1920s.

This chapter concerns Tatarstan efforts to build a nation in the absence of a state. It addresses the question of what Tatar nation-builders consider the essential ingredients of the nation, as it is variously defined, and points out the inherent problems in implementing sovereignty. The groundwork for addressing this question emerges from an exploration of the particularly Tatar thought systems that inform Tatar national ideologies. This exploration begins by revisiting the question of cultural difference, touched upon in Chapter 1.

As their migration stories demonstrate, Tatars often view the world radically differently from how Russian monolinguals see it. This difference is not just a product of knowing a language other than Russian or the exponentially increased dimensionality in the perceived world that bilingualism affords. It is a question of culture—of the ways in which shared

personal histories, upbringing, traditions, family relations, and everything else that goes into the hopper of life experiences teach a person to make sense out of the world.¹

Social Networks

Tatar-speakers constantly form and renew social networks. When introduced to someone new, they immediately begin to look for shared connections. This happens not only by asking, "Whom do you know?" but also by inquiring "Where are you from?" and tracing social networks through workplaces and native villages. The goal of these exchanges is to create a link by locating a common acquaintance or shared knowledge of a place, the purpose of which can be instrumental. Rural affiliation is crucial to navigating urban networks as I learned from Fliura, whose family had lived in the Tatar Quarter for generations. When Fliura suddenly became unemployed in the late 1990s, a friend arranged for her to meet with someone in Kazan's city administration who promised to help her find work. The friend instructed her to present herself as "Tatar," saying, "Wear something attractive, but not revealing, and speak only Tatar." Fliura went to the interview and was asked, "Where are your parents from?" "Kazan," she answered. "And your grandparents?" "Also Kazan." "I'm sorry, but I can't help you," was the city administrator's response. Because Fliura had no village connections, she told me with some bitterness several years later, there wasn't anyone with whom the administrator could place her.²

Beyond this, analyzing Kazan's social networks—tight-knit and overlapping—reveals that the nexes from which Tatar nation-builders have emerged do not parse easily along ethnic lines.³ A social network chart of nation-builders created in 1999 included politicians, university professors, bankers, journalists, theater artists and administrators, schoolteachers, shopkeepers, and bazaar workers—representing a fairly broad variety of occupations ranging from high to low prestige.

In addition to the existence of significant occupational variety in these networks of acquaintanceship, not all the people represented in them are Tatars. Moreover, even strong political oppositions did not rule out ongoing friendly acquaintanceship. Thus, one of the most important scholars working on the development of the Tatar nation speaks regularly on the telephone with Alexander Saligaev, the moderately alarmist Director of Kazan's Slavic Cultural Society, who not only turns out to be married to a

Tatar woman but admits some passive knowledge of the Tatar language.⁴ Similarly, a Muslim Tatar friend of mine who calls himself a “nationalist” tends the graves of a Russian Orthodox Old Believer family who came from his natal village. Beyond this, Tatarstan’s most radical and controversial nationalist, Fäüzia Bäyrämova, who is shunned by the government as a dangerous extremist, maintains friendships with Tatar academics firmly embedded in high-level government institutions, despite her effective exile to the Tatarstan city of Yar Chally—the home of the defunct Kamaz Truck factories—in the mid-1990s.⁵ In a more recent development, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s Kazan bureau, which broadcasts oppositionist news, has taken up residence in a building owned by President Shaimiev’s son. The bureau director is married to Tatarstan’s Minister of Culture. Even so, the Tatarstan government pressures RFE/RL to curtail its critical reporting on sensitive issues and the FSB (formerly the KGB) regularly harasses the journalists who work there.

Thus, what appears to be one large network may be understood to represent at least two interconnected webs of social ties—one of intelligentsia—educated people working in higher education institutions and another of Tatar-speakers of diverse social statuses. Tatar-speakers in seemingly prestigious occupations constitute a cultural *élite* only for other Tatars, since the rest of Tatarstan’s population generally considers Tatar an uncultured and low-prestige language. As a result, the bonds between people in high and low status occupations in the Tatar-speaking world are stronger than they would be among Russian monolinguals in analogous positions. As with African American social networks, family members are likely to enjoy differentiated social statuses, based upon occupation, and therefore to cross *élite*/non-*élite* lines.⁶ Because all Tatar-speaking rural migrants share the bond of the migration experience, a Tatar-speaking university professor and a Tatar-speaking shop clerk comprise part of the same Tatar-speaking network, the freshness of which is renewed each time the professor makes a purchase in Tatar language using Tatar rules of polite engagement. The non-discreteness of these networks is a measure of the harmonious relations among Tatarstan people with different worldviews, irrespective of their primary language of identification. Indeed, though these networks chart a situation in flux, they simultaneously demonstrate the reproduction of stability in social relations across national boundaries and evidence of the multiplicity of Tatarstan’s non-bounded publics.⁷

Tatars and Patriarchy

When Moscow feminist writer and journalist Maria Arbatova came to Kazan in June 2006 to host a conference on women in business for a Russian women's magazine, the only question she asked the assembled Russian and Tatar entrepreneurs was how Muslim men impeded them in their work.⁸ In response, the women described how Tatar men had supported them in their efforts to advance their businesses. Arbatova, steeped in the rejection of women's rights that pervades Russian society, literally refused to hear their words and implied that their statements were evidence of brainwashing.⁹ She assumed that "Muslim" men must be more sexist than Russian men.

Kazan Russians likewise feel confident that they know about Muslim gender relations. Living in Kazan in 1999–2001, I found a gifted hairdresser, an ethnic Russian who ran her own business. The first time I went for a haircut she told me that her mother knows Tatar and reads the Quran because the mother's childhood neighbor was a mullah. The mullah's children had a Tatar nanny, who was also the nanny of the hairdresser's mother. The nanny didn't speak Russian and made all the children read *namaz* [sic] before they could eat.¹⁰ During the same visit, the hairdresser bragged that she was so talented with scissors that she styled the hair of all the actors at the Tatar Kamal Theatre and was a frequent guest at the theatre director's house. She said the theater's artistic work was simplistic and uninteresting, which also seemed to be her assessment of the artists as individuals.

On another occasion, when I went to the hairdresser to clean up for a television interview, she was visibly upset. She complained that she had just argued with her husband. They had had plans to go to someone's house the previous night, but she was late and he left without her. "It wouldn't have troubled him to wait five minutes," she said, "it was just on principle. Besides," she added with tears in her eyes, "it wasn't my fault I was late." A moment later, she informed me that she didn't have any children because both her husbands had children from previous marriages. "When you're young," she said, again on the brink of tears, "it doesn't matter so much, but with age—I'm almost fifty—it becomes important." I changed the subject in an effort to keep her from crying and told her about the television interview. I said, "They want to interview me because I'm an American who knows Tatar." She snipped some hair from the back of my head and sighed, "Ah, that is a rare thing," and continued, "Although my mother, who is Russian," she stressed, "knows Tatar really well, I think that Tatar is an impoverished language in comparison to our rich

Russian.” I countered, “I don’t think that’s so. Day to day speech, of course, isn’t terribly rich, but then again, that’s true for Russian too.” I explained, “I have started to read Tatar literature and it is very rich and very beautiful. The problem is,” I said, “it doesn’t translate. That’s also true for Russian,” I added. “It’s no good in translation.” “Yes,” she agreed, invoking a common nationalist trope “it would be impossible to grasp the depth of our Pushkin.”¹¹ “Besides,” I affirmed, “most of the Tatar you hear in Kazan is from people who work at the bazaar. Educated Tatars don’t speak Tatar in public.” The hairdresser concurred.

In what seemed a nonsequitur the hairdresser suddenly assured me that Russian women are freer than Tatar women. “Tatar women are oppressed. Whatever the husband says, goes.” I told her that among the families I know the husbands may yell, but everyone listens to the wives. I waited for her response. Not receiving one, I gave her an out, “Maybe it’s just the families I know?” She replied, “Yes, it’s just the families you know. Tatar men only care about themselves.” She illustrated her point of view with a joke.

A Frenchman has a wife and a mistress and he loves his mistress.

An Englishman has a wife and a mistress and he loves his wife.

A Russian has a wife and a mistress and he loves the bottle.

A Jew has a wife and a mistress and he loves his mother.

A Tatar has a wife and a mistress and he loves himself.

The haircut I got that day wasn’t what I wanted and I mentioned to a Tatar friend afterwards that I couldn’t give the hairdresser adequate instructions as she cut because I was trying to keep her from crying. Thinking of a pensioner I knew who would break down in sobs every time she mentioned her deceased mother, I said that there seems to be a tendency among Russian women to cry easily. The friend replied, “True, they aren’t as patient [*sabyr*] as Tatar women.”

A Russian-speaking university student I met at Kazan’s German society in October 1999 was similarly eager to tell me that Tatar women are oppressed. As soon as she found out I was in Kazan to study Tatar language and culture, she gave me her opinion of mixed marriages. “Russians don’t want their children to marry Tatars and vice versa. Tatar girls may go out with Russian boys, and want to marry them, but their mothers are against it.” I commented that more than a quarter of the marriages in Kazan in the 1980s were ethnically mixed. She replied, “Well, people do it anyway. They fall in love and get married. But there can be problems, particularly if the Tatar is from a very Muslim family. Where the woman is in second place. He may tell his wife that his feet are cold and she needs

to bring him some hot water to soak them. It doesn't matter where they are. They could be at the dacha, where she would have to draw water from a pump and then heat it up on a stove. He still expects her to do it. And Russian girls aren't brought up that way. They don't take to that," she twisted her mouth into a pout.

By contrast to the German student's impression, the Tatar husbands I knew had a sense of their responsibility to their families born of an understanding that working together is necessary for survival. The men drove the family car, if there was one, but it was their duty to stay sober and be ready to chauffeur family members and friends as necessary. When guests came to visit, some Tatar husbands helped set the table and serve food, which I never observed in a Russian household. One family I knew—the Apakaevs—had divided up the laundry chores so that the mother washed, the daughter rinsed, and the father ironed (a formidable chore since, as a hygienic measure, Tatars press all their clothing, underwear, socks, sheets, towels, and other linens).

One afternoon while drinking tea with teenage Tatar girls from the Lab School after our English lesson, the subject of male attitudes towards women came up. The girls said that the boys in their class don't see them as equals. One, Altinay, asserted that it was "in their blood," ancient, and the result of Islam. Another, Liliya, a girl with no father, elucidated, "The attitude has always been, 'A woman's place is in the kitchen. Be quiet.'" Earlier that day, before our lesson, Altinay and Liliya had recounted incidents they had witnessed of male violence against women. I had shared with the students a comment my Russian landlord had made to the effect that all Chechens should be exterminated. Altinay responded by describing an incident she witnessed on the bus the preceding evening. "A man with tattoos on his hands—evidently from prison," she said, "Grabbed a girl and beat her head against the wall of the bus because he was offended that she and her friends were laughing. 'What are you laughing for?' he screamed in Russian as he attacked her." This was followed by a story from Liliya about being in the bakery up the street and seeing a drunken husband slam his wife's face into a metal grate because she reprimanded him for being intoxicated. Both girls presumed that the violent men were ethnic Russians: the first aggressor yelled in Russian and the second was publicly intoxicated, which Tatars so strongly associate with Russians that they ironically call a bottle of vodka *ury's malae*—"Russian boy."

My story about violent words—not acts—wasn't gendered in terms of being specifically directed against women. However, the Tatar teenagers didn't seem aware that their accounts differed categorically from mine.

Moreover, they didn't refer to them later when they were complaining of Tatar sexism and didn't appear to make any connection between Tatar sexism and male violence. Indeed, on other occasions when we talked about Islam, the same teenagers asserted that Muslim men treat women with respect, although they disagreed over whether women in Saudi Arabia are treated well. Liliya, who thought that Saudi women have it good, contrasted her image of their lives with a well-known adage. She said, "Russians even have a proverb—If he beats me, that means he loves me," which signifies that if a husband beats a wife, it must be because he loves her: Otherwise, he wouldn't display such passion.

In practice, Tatar men are just as capable of exploiting women as any men. For instance, in 2005, a female Tatar journalist I knew was sued for libel because her investigative reporting dug too deeply into questions of Tatarstan government corruption. She quit her job after her newspaper's Tatar lawyer implied she would have to perform sexual favors if she wanted him to do the work necessary to win her case. The journalist quickly found work in advertising, but the experience left her disillusioned about Tatar-language culture.

Biculturalism

Despite assumptions Russians make that Tatars, as Muslims, should be authoritarian, my experience reveals them to be more flexible than Russians in accepting the unfamiliar. Take, for example, left-handedness. In the Soviet Union, left-handed children were forcibly "reeducated" to write with their right hands. It is therefore understandable that people in Russia would find left-handedness unacceptable. When I lived in St. Petersburg in the early 1990s, Russians were upset and even offended when I wrote with my left hand. Once, in Kazan, an old Russian man, a stranger who saw me writing notes while riding a tram, scolded me for it. He told me to write with my right hand and volunteered his opinion that writing left-handed was a sign that I lacked willpower. By contrast, Tatars reacted positively when they noticed I was left-handed. They said being left-handed was the sign of a talented, intelligent person, though they would have had as little exposure to left-handedness as Russians and, as in Christianity, in Islam the left hand is the sign of Satan. Why their reactions should be so different remains a mystery.

In another instance, one dark November evening in 1999 I went to a beauty parlor on Bauman Street and received a terrible haircut. The fol-

lowing day I asked some teenage girls hanging out in the hallway at the Lab School where to go for a trim. They asked me what I wanted. I pointed at my head and said, "That it be even, for example." They looked at my hair and laughed, saying, "Yes, on one side it's okay, but on the other..." I told them, "It's already better than it was. I've been fixing it myself." A girl from one of the Russian classes suddenly spoke up, "It's bad luck to cut your own hair." Her companions said they hadn't heard of this superstition, but she confirmed, "If you cut your own hair, you shorten your life." I responded, "Oh, I don't know what's going to happen to me. I've cut my hair so many times." One of the Tatar girls interceded, "If you don't believe in the superstition, then nothing bad will happen."

The Tatar girl's assertion that belief is what gives a superstition force merits comment. Being bilingual, she moves back and forth between a domestic world of Tatar mores and a public one where Russian values largely hold sway.¹² This is mirrored by movement back and forth between her parents' native village and Kazan's urban setting. Though Tatar moral values hold greater potency for the girl and her peers, urban Russian values—alien to their village-born parents—likewise possess familiarity. Even so, when the hegemonic values are unfamiliar, these teenagers and indeed all bilingual Tatars, like minority language speakers in other contexts, have become used to needing to subordinate their naturalized notions of normalcy.¹³ They understand that the patterns according to which people structure their worlds vary and that these variations must coexist in order to maintain harmony.

Tatar Islam

The presumption that Tatar men are more patriarchal than others arises from the existence of certain assumptions about Islam. However, like all world religions, Islam is not interpreted and practiced the same way everywhere, not even among Tatars who live in Kazan.

My description of Tatar Islam is ethnographic. It approaches Islam as an experience and part of how Tatars make sense out of the world. In this capacity, being Muslim has great significance as an oppositional identity to "Christian," whom Tatars elide with "Russian." Some Tatars embrace Islam wholeheartedly. When they encounter women in public wearing modest dress, they express pleasure at seeing such clean, tidy, white scarves because they perceive wearing a headscarf without shame is a point of national pride.¹⁴ Other Tatars were leery of the proliferation of headscarved

women. Älfiye, a middle-aged Tatar university administrator, was relieved to discover that my Turkish fiancé was not religious. She confessed that she does not like religion, although, she added, “With increasing age, who knows? I am not yet mature. Islam is fine for men, but I’m sure our girls never wore those scarves. What use would they have for them?”

Similarly, in June 2000, Läisän, a Tatar intellectual in her mid-twenties, assured me that *wahabism*—the term for the aberrant version of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia—would not make it far in Tatarstan. Läisän said that when *wahabis* or even Tatars who have been educated in “Arab Islam” arrive in a Tatar village, people ignore them, unless it becomes necessary to expel them. She illustrated Tatar attitudes towards “Arab Islam” by telling a story about an elder who passed away in her village. The children of the deceased invited an *imam* who had been educated in an Arab country to perform the funeral services. When the *imam* arrived, he informed the local elders that what they were practicing was not Islam. The elders all stood up and left the funeral services. Later, after the *imam* was gone, the elders went to the graveyard and completed their burial rites. To underline her point that “Arab Islam” was foreign to Tatar culture, Läisän explained that Tatar women have never done this, making a gesture as if wrapping her head and chin up in a bandage. She repeated herself to make sure I understood, “Tatar women have never dressed like that. If you want to be Tatar, wear a *kalfak*.”¹⁵

Although some Muslims, like the Arab-educated *imam* just mentioned, would disagree, Islamic cultural practices vary from one locale to another. For example, in some places, Muslim men refuse to shake hands with women because doing so renders them “unclean” for prayer. (Most Russian men won’t shake a woman’s hand either, because they don’t consider women equals.¹⁶) By contrast, Tatar cultural rules dictate that a man may only shake a woman’s hand if she proffers it first and thus indicates that the contact won’t violate her sense of propriety. Once a woman extends her hand, a Tatar man must take it and, if he’s being traditional, clasp it in both of his as a gesture of good will. Tatar women likewise shake with both hands to demonstrate their reciprocal openness to each other.

Tatar Islam’s most important historical influence is jadidism. At some point since the mid-19th century, peace emerged as one of its central tenets.¹⁷ As Hayat *apa* explained to me, in teaching Tatarstan history, schoolteachers and university professors explain that in the past people lived peacefully in the Middle Volga region (though historical evidence demonstrates otherwise) and consequently present-day Tatarstan residents do not have the right to violate the tradition of peaceful coexistence.¹⁸ It was

therefore of vital importance to Tatar-nation builders to found an Islamic university in Kazan in 1998 with funding from the Russian government—"So that," according to Damir Isxakov, "Our children don't study Islam abroad and come back extremists."

Keeping physical order or *tärtip* is likewise important to being a Muslim. Thus, the students in the Lab School's eleventh grade Tatar class contributed dues to buy the classroom broom, which was the only one in the school. The other children, in both the Russian and younger Tatar classes, regularly borrowed it to sweep their rooms. And, since there are no paper products in school bathrooms, the same eleventh graders would take turns bringing the classroom's collective hand towel home to be laundered.

Tärtip is essential to *tärbiiä*—or upbringing—which a Tatarstan Ministry of Education official at a conference I attended in 2001 pronounced the most important issue in Tatar national education. Officials at the conference advocated creating electives in the Cultural History of Religion to balance out courses in Orthodox Culture the Russian Ministry of Education had recently introduced into schools. In that forum and others, Tatars expressed great concern about the dangers that AIDS and drug addiction pose for their children. "Without Islam," a prominent nation-builder explained to me in private, "Tatars won't be sober enough to exist as an independent state."

Womanly Emotions and *Sabyrlyk*

Tatar culture dictates that sorrowful and angry outbursts, particularly from women, are inappropriate. Being a Tatar entails cultivating the ability to diffuse negative emotions, especially anger, at all costs. Crying is thought to attract bad luck.¹⁹ Even at funerals, Tatar women hold back their tears and maintain a calm demeanor. Ideally, women should be emotionally expressive—a sign that they are not repressing their humanity—but their expressiveness is supposed to emerge from a grounded and diffuse spirit of openness [*achyklyk*] and empathy and an ethical approach to living.²⁰ That is, women's emotionality is both supposed to serve as a moderating force and requires being kept in check.

An unevenly observed prohibition against women of childbearing age attending funerals provides an example of how Tatars attempt to moderate women's perceived emotionality.²¹ Several men and women I asked about it told me that the prohibition stems from fear that, if women were to attend funerals, they might give in to their feelings and cry, thereby making

the occasion more painful for everyone. One (childless) woman gave the alternate explanation that, since women bring life into the world, they ought not to be present when it departs.

Both explanations indicate the centrality of motherhood to Tatars' understanding of what it means to be a woman. For, according to Tatars, giving in to uncontrolled emotional outbursts is antithetical to cultivating the qualities that make women good mothers. Indeed, among Tatar women, the ability to channel controlled emotionality, which Tatars call patience or *sabyrlyk*, is key to maintaining their responsibility to look after their families and the other people to whom they extend the warmth of kinship. The ability to temper emotion evokes unmitigated respect from men and children.

Similar to Russians, all the Tatars I spoke to seem to agree that girls only attain womanhood through fulfilling the social roles of wife and mother. However, different from Russians, many of whom think it important to have been married in order to be considered a woman, Tatars foreground the importance of motherhood as a woman's defining social role.²² Indeed, despite Tatars' stricter sexual mores, it is not shameful to have a baby out of wedlock once no hope remains of finding a husband.²³ Instead, motherhood elevates a woman's social status. For example, Aygul, the childless woman mentioned above, was in her mid-forties and unmarried. She had a friend, Älfiye—another Tatar woman with no husband or children—who was noted for her bluntness.

Älfiye once pointed out to me that Aygul never brought men home. "If she had been Russian," Älfiye noted, "Aygul would shack up with a man in the two-room apartment she shares with her parents with little thought to how they might feel." Instead, Aygul was careful to maintain the appearance of virginity even though she knew she would never get married—this is Tatar *tärbiia*. However, despite the Tatar prohibition against sex out of wedlock, Aygul's mother urged her to get pregnant so that she would have someone to look after her in her old age. Implicit in this practical concern is an ideological one, which is that women cease to be viewed as children once they have reproduced.

Reproducing removes some of the shame of not being able to find a husband. It also serves as a way for women to demonstrate the quiet, enduring, long-suffering heroism of *sabyrlyk*. By contrast, women without children have little opportunity to demonstrate this quality. A conversation I had with Hayat *apa* and her husband about Älfiye illustrates this. When I told the couple that Älfiye had no children and had never been married, the husband broke in with the exclamation, "That's not a woman!" "Yes,"

agreed Hayat *apa* with a little laugh, “No children and no husband, she’s hardly a woman.” Assuming, incorrectly, that they felt sorry for Älfiye for being isolated, I attempted to temper their concern by adding, “She’s generally cheerful.” “Of course she’s cheerful,” responded the wife, “She’s never had to look after anyone else in her whole life.”

In a similar application of these standards, most Tatars have ostracized Tatar nationalist Fäüzia Bährämovä because she violated female behavioral norms. Bährämovä is said to have physically attacked another woman with whom she had a political disagreement—demonstrating her lack of *sabyrlyk*. Moreover, Bährämovä is alleged to have declared that children who are the products of ethnically mixed marriages do not belong anywhere and therefore should be rounded up and put into camps. Tatars view this as a demonstration of Bährämovä’s lack of maternal feeling and overall inadequacy as a human being. Many of them don’t care whether or not she actually made this declaration. What’s important is that she’s the kind of person who is capable of making it.

Through my own failure to remain open and *sabyr* under stress, I came to understand the difficulty of maintaining Tatar standards of behavior. When a local doctor told my fiancé, who was visiting me in Kazan, that he was too ill to fly, I went to a travel agency to change the date on his return air ticket. The Tatar agent informed me that the ticket was no longer valid and that I had to purchase another at full cost. I lost my temper and yelled at her. Aisylu, who had accompanied me to the travel agency, smoothed things over by volunteering to share her professional services and connections with the agent. Afterwards, Aisylu agreed that my reaction had been completely inappropriate, patiently explaining that favorable resolution comes from always being able to find a path of negotiation.

In contrast, among some Russians, violent outbursts are not necessarily condemned, and, one could argue, even condoned.²⁴ Young men commonly walk around Kazan and other cities in Russia with their right hands bandaged or in casts—injuries resulting from drunken brawls. At funerals, in contrast to Tatar women, Russians wail in dismay like Greek women from Classical mythology. When I attended a funeral for a Russian schoolteacher in her 80s in subzero temperatures—it was minus 25 Fahrenheit—during two of the three hours we spent standing around in the graveyard, the Russian women screamed and cried and clutched at the corpse of the deceased. Meanwhile, the Tatar women at the funeral stood by stoically without tears.

People acculturated to Tatar linguistic practices are trained to keep the peace and to convince their opponents to comply with their wishes

through non-confrontational persuasion. At the same time, people are expected to maintain emotional openness in daily interactions. Though Tatar women endure especial pressure to temper their emotions, Tatar men are not exempt from the requirement to maintain peace. Indeed, Tatars do not view small-scale social negotiations as different in kind from the large-scale political negotiations primarily carried out by men. For example, the first time we met, a secretary to Tatarstan Presidential Advisor Rafael Khakimov showed me the Russian translation of *Getting To Yes* he was in the process of reading. The Tatarstan government has proven itself willing to engage patiently in endless negotiations with the Russian government in Moscow in order to hammer out the small details of political agreements.²⁵ Several Tatars I knew, some of whom were dominant Tatar-speakers and some of whom weren't, attributed their ability to survive the Soviet period, in part, to being able to control their emotions, contrasting their own reactions to Russian colonialism and the re-emergence of self-determination since the mid-1980s with Chechens' lack of desire to negotiate. That is, the Tatar cultural ideal of *sabyrlyk* is considered essential to the survival of Tatar culture.

Nation-Building Without a State

Historically, nation-building is usually part of a process to justify and lend authority to an already-existing state. In Tatarstan, nation-building has occurred despite the absence of a state. Notwithstanding its location in the heart of Russia, Tatarstan acted on the terms of its 1990 sovereignty declaration by developing the foreign relations befitting a state. Its foreign relations included those with other polities in the Russian Federation, as well as with external states. Since only the Republic of Turkey officially recognized Tatarstan's sovereignty, relations with other states were largely ideological, rather than political.²⁶ Despite lack of recognition, Tatarstan successfully created trading partnerships with Germany, Finland, Poland, the US, Lithuania, Turkey, Kuwait, Japan, and numerous other countries.²⁷ Tatar nation-builders drew the political legitimacy for their efforts variously from Lenin's statements regarding the self-determination of Soviet nations; a statement Boris Yeltsin made during a 1991 visit to Kazan that Tatarstan should take all the sovereignty it could swallow; the artful wording of the 1992 referendum on sovereignty; and the bilateral treaty signed between Tatarstan and Moscow in 1994.²⁸ Since Vladimir Putin's visit to Kazan in the summer of 2000, these relations

have been unequivocally downgraded to commercial and cultural exchanges.

Internally, Tatars, like other former Soviets, primarily focused on the revival and elevation of the status of their national language—which is the prescribed, standardized, literary version developed by the Soviet state. The Tatarstan government tried to do this by promoting mass media in Tatar and implementing a system of bilingual education for all Tatarstan children. Tatar nation-builders also attempted to support Tatarstan's nation-building by creating symbols of statehood.

Like all ideologues, nation-builders manipulate the idea of the nation in ways that don't conform to objective reality. Echoing the exclusionary nationalisms associated with 19th-century Europe, Tatar ideologies sometimes exclude non-Tatars from discourses on the future of the nation while envisioning ethnic Tatars as a homogenous group. They almost always perpetuate the Soviet stereotype that the native language of Tatars is the Tatar language and that Tatars are by definition Muslim. In actuality, ethnic Tatars, Tatar-speakers, and Muslims form three different, if overlapping, publics. Only about half of ethnic Tatars speak the Tatar language.²⁹ Käräshen Tatars are Orthodox Christians and Muslims of various nationalities—Bashkirs, Azeris, Uzbeks, Arabs and so on live in Tatarstan. Beyond this, whom “the nation” includes fluctuates—sometimes nation-builders appear to mean all people of all nationalities living in Tatarstan. At others, they imply that “the nation” is “the Tatar nation.” Nation-builders frequently project the local culture of Tatarstan Tatars upon the millions of Tatars living outside the borders of the republic. Since only two million of the 5.6 million Tatars living in Russia, according to the 2002 All-Russia Census, reside within Tatarstan, some nation-builders contend that Tatarstan has a special mission to elevate the prestige of Tatar language and culture for all Tatars.³⁰ Others maintain that because Kazan was a center for Muslim learning in pre-revolutionary Russia, promoting Tatar culture requires Islamifying Tatarstan society.³¹

Though Russians perceive Tatar nation-builders as advocates for “the Tatar nation,” nation-building efforts likewise benefit other nationalities living in Tatarstan and beyond its borders. For example, nation-builders created the One-Percent Fund, which committed one percent of Kazan's budget to supporting the city's various ethnic organizations. They also developed language materials for Tatarstan nationalities with small populations, such as the Chuvash, Mordva, and Mari, who also live in titular republics on Tatarstan's borders. The language materials Tatarstan nation-

builders developed for these nationalities were created in consortium and shared with education officials in Chuvashia, Mordovia, and Mari-El.

Implementing political change requires simplifying the social field. Many nation-builders' efforts comprise part of a project to balance out Russian political, linguistic, and cultural hegemony with the aim of creating a multicultural society. When asked, they acknowledge that the various communities considered to constitute "the nation" and the boundaries surrounding them are porous, demonstrating that their model is not only based on 19th-century European exclusionary nationalism, but also emerges from indigenous thought.

Tatar National Ideologies

The principal ideas that shaped Tatar nation-builders' attempts to create a Tatarstan nation emerge from such cultural traits as *tärtip*, *tärbiia*, Tatar Islam, and *sabyrlyk*. Additionally, their endeavors were guided by a philosophical approach influenced variously by a collective nostalgic melancholy called *mong* (the topic of Chapter 7), environmental ecology, and a healthy dose of Leninism. Since Tatars have a strong tradition of literary production, nation-builders have written extensively on the topic of sovereignty. From this body of work I consider below three publications that best represent Tatar national ideologies. Because of the tight-knit nature of Tatar-speaking social networks and Tatars' habits of collaboration, their authorship is collective.³²

The first work on Tatarstan sovereignty is *The Twilight of the Empire* (1993), a book in Russian on Russian Federalism by Rafael Khakimov, former advisor to President Mintimir Shaimiev. The second is the Tatarstan Ministry of Education's *National Doctrine for Developing the Republic of Tatarstan's Educational System* (1998), in Russian, which outlines a program for creating the generation of the future. The third source is *The Tatar Path: A Geopolitical Analysis for the Fate of Tatars* (2001) written in Tatar by Rāshit Safin, a retired military officer and former leader in the Tatar Social Center (TOTs), a political organization.

Federalism from a Tatar Perspective

In order to understand Khakimov's arguments in *The Twilight of the Empire*, it is necessary to know whom he is writing against. One such person was Russian ethnographer Galina Starovoitova, who while serving as

Yeltsin's Minister of Nationalities, repeatedly voiced the opinion that Tatarstan could not be deemed sovereign because its majority population was not Tatar. According to the 1989 Soviet census, only 48.5% of Tatarstan's population was Tatar.

Khakimov is also in dialogue with Russian nationalism of the variety propounded by writer and former dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn. In 1990, a Parisian press published the Russian-language version of Solzhenitsyn's volume *How To Rebuild Russia* and made it available in the Russian Federation. In it Solzhenitsyn proposed that the Soviet Union disaggregate and Russia redraw its borders to include Ukraine, Belarus, and northern Kazakhstan, where the majority population is ethnic Russian. Russia would thus cast off the rest of the Soviet Union as an impediment to advancement. The book completely ignores the existence of non-Russian nationalities in Russia and the other Soviet republics.

As Muscovite writer Tatiana Tolstaya aptly noted in her review of the book's English translation, *Rebuilding Russia*, "If someone in Russia were to take Solzhenitsyn's recommendations seriously and set about fulfilling them point by point, the country would collapse within a month."³³ Be that as it may, how most Russians received Solzhenitsyn's ideas in the early 1990s is difficult to gauge. Several intellectuals I interviewed in St. Petersburg and Moscow considered Solzhenitsyn to be out of touch with Russian reality, though, when he returned to Russia in 1994 after 20 years in exile, thousands of Russians turned out to welcome him.³⁴ Like other nations suffering from economic and political instability, Russians don't necessarily shun extreme nationalism, as evidenced by the uninterrupted popularity of Russian nationalist Duma Deputy Vladimir Zhirinovskiy since the early 1990s and the lack of criminal prosecution of a spate of racially motivated attacks against minorities that began in the late nineties. Most significant for the purposes of this discussion, however, is that Tatar nation-builders take Russian nationalist discourses seriously.

Khakimov argues that while Stalinist concepts of ethnos and nation still hold sway in Russia, they

explain hardly anything about social processes.... For an ethnos to exist, it is not necessary it have all the signs of the "Stalinist" definition—a shared language, territory, culture, economic, and psychological disposition.³⁵

Khakimov provides examples of how Tatars historically have not fit the Stalinist definition of ethnos as a biological category:

Moreover, the Stalinist definition does not exemplify the characteristics of a nation because it does not contain the most important indicator of nationhood—the ability to govern. That which transforms a collective of people into a nation is government. The citizens of a government who live according to common interests comprise a nation. By the way, that is exactly why nationality is not displayed on western passports. All citizens are considered to belong to the nation, irrespective of their ethnic origin. Any citizen of France, whether he's German, an Algerian by birth or a Turk by origin, is considered French.³⁶

French Algerians might beg to differ with Khakimov's idealization of French society. All the same, Khakimov correctly asserts that the Russian Empire's government has historically neither been ethnically Russian nor expressed the national interests of Russians. As a consequence, he claims, ethnic Russians living in Russian provinces have more in common with colonized indigenous peoples than they do with the Russians in the metropole, who have benefited from ruling and exploiting those provinces. This is why, Khakimov explains, Russians, Chuvashes, and other "ethnoses" living in Tatarstan voted in favor of sovereignty. Together, he adds, "they constitute a people," which, Khakimov defines as a group that realizes that it is a subject of history, possesses a concrete territory, and is "prepared to live together on that shared territory while striving to obtain political rights to independent rule of its own government, economy, and culture."³⁷

At the same time, Khakimov argues, this people cannot be bled of its various ethnic particularities. Democratization requires giving greater rights of self-rule to Russia's various polities, many of which the Soviet government defined as the titular territories of particular indigenous peoples. Khakimov insists:

It is not possible to separate the "national" from the "human" in a person. Individuals are the bearers of historical traditions who become persons thanks to language and education. Therefore civil rights include, first and foremost, the right to speak one's native language, to develop one's culture, to possess the means to exist, and so on. Without these elemental, natural rights, the rest does not have any meaning.³⁸

Raised in the USSR, Khakimov presumes that national identity takes precedence over all others.

Tatarstan Educational Reform

The title of the Tatarstan Ministry of Education pamphlet, *National Doctrine for Developing the Republic of Tatarstan's Educational System* refers to education in the broadest sense of the term, as "*Obrazovatel'no-vospitatel'nii*." The Russian word *obrazovanie* signifies education with regards to the school subjects children study, while *vospitanie* means upbringing, the Tatar word for which is *tärbiia*. The pamphlet does not list the *Doctrine's* individual authors. Rather, its collective author is the Center of History and the Theory of National Education at the Tatarstan Academy of Science's History Institute—a Tatar scholarly institution Khakimov directs—which suggests that the authors are all Tatars. Despite this, the *Doctrine's* broad-minded vision is ethnically inclusive in its proposals for cultivating the republic's future generation, which it calls "Tatarstan's national wealth."³⁹

Voicing a commonly articulated view, the *Doctrine* describes circumstances that make Tatarstan unique. These concern its location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and the consequent mixing of cultural influences from each continent, the peaceful coexistence of Islam and Christianity, and the co-residence of numerous nationalities.⁴⁰ The *Doctrine* proclaims that the "first stage of reform of the Republic of Tatarstan's educational system is fundamentally realized. The educational system is freeing itself from the legacy of totalitarianism. It is becoming more open, democratic, and diverse."⁴¹ Despite this advance, since "only 15% of children today are born absolutely healthy," it emphasizes, "it is crucially necessary to strengthen the public health orientation of preschool institutions."⁴²

Notwithstanding its recognition of the deplorable state of public health, otherwise generally ignored by post-Soviet government institutions, the *Doctrine* primarily focuses on cultivating children's mental health and hence, it argues, their social health as well. Thus, the *Doctrine* "proceeds from the assumption that education plays a primary role for the Republic of Tatarstan in developing national culture and the nation, the formation of civil society, and a transition to steady economic growth based on modernized industry" and "takes into account the ideals, goals, and values of the people of sovereign Tatarstan."⁴³

The *Doctrine* proposes creating a flexible, open, and emerging system of uninterrupted education...capable of guaranteeing the Republic of Tatarstan's preparedness to meet the historical challenges of the 21st century...including the long-term development of

the Tatar nation, increasing general national unity and civil concord, economic growth, social and professional mobility, the standard of living, and public health; and acquisition by every citizen of a primary education.⁴⁴

The *Doctrine* emphasizes that all citizens should have equal access to education, regardless of social status and sphere of professional activity. However, the most important task is to socialize young people correctly. The authors explain their plan:

The *National Doctrine for Developing the Republic of Tatarstan's Education System* declares the need to form in the growing generation a moral temperament based upon spiritual and ethical values common to all mankind...as follows:

- 1) Attitude towards society—civic socialization (citizenship, respect for the law, social activism and the conscientiousness of a citizen of the Republic of Tatarstan)
- 2) Attitude towards the public—nurturing humane behavior (respect for the rights and freedoms of the individual; worthiness and decency)
- 3) Attitude towards culture (valuing cultural achievements, nurturing spirituality, national self-awareness and national uniqueness; accepting beauty and harmony)
- 4) Attitude towards work and future profession (nurturing industry and respect for working people of all professions; consciously choosing a profession), and
- 5) Personal relations (valuing family, children, and friends; ethical family socialization with a regard for ethnopedagogy—formation of a conscience, honesty, and a sense of decency).⁴⁵

Ethnopedagogy refers to upbringing within the traditions of a particular ethnicity without the interfering domination of another ethnic group. The term has significance, because, as Khakimov indicates, Tatar nation-builders believe that civic responsibility emerges from being secure in one's own ethnic identity. The schoolteachers involved in nation-building whom I interviewed frequently stated, "If a person respects himself as a member of a worthy nationality, then he can extend that respect to people of all other nationalities."

But, Tatar nation-builders' breadth of vision for social change exceeds the national. They consider that education will have a significant role in Tatarstan's gradual entrance into the world market and in reshaping social structures. They propose shedding totalitarianism and encouraging democracy by creating different models for educational institutions and by promoting teachers' creativity and initiative through freeing them from Ministry of Education decrees.⁴⁶ Additionally, they seek to increase children's and teachers' ability to use computer technology.⁴⁷ Finally, the *Doctrine* states that maintaining schools in agrarian settlements is necessary to discourage migration to large population centers, which contributes to overcrowding.⁴⁸

The Tatar Path

Tatar yuly [the Tatar path] is the title of a book and is also a philosophy supported by a handful of élite intellectuals whose program for shaping the future of Tatarstan is the most radical of those considered here. The book *Tatar yuly*, written in Tatar by Rāshit Safin, was presented to me by its editor, Damir Isxakov. In the inscription to the copy he gave me, Isxakov noted, “This book contains the foundation of Tatar ideology.”⁴⁹ In *Tatar yuly*’s preface, as well as during a personal interview in 2001, the book’s author specified that his ideas are the fruit of the national movement’s 12 years of growth.

Safin perceives the world to be in a state of crisis, the nature of which he explains as follows:

Why is it that humankind, in order to preserve itself and to guarantee conditions that will allow for the continued growth of civilization, is obliged to keep in mind the demands of individual societies—among them nations—and people? Because the multitude and variety of weapons of mass destruction, the growth of terror technologies, the proliferation of nuclear arms, and other threats to civilization have reached a level such that individual groups, even individual people, are able to put the safety of all life on Earth in peril... In short, the problem facing humankind is immense and normalizing it will require the participation of all peoples—including us.⁵⁰

In addition to weapons, Safin considers the global economy’s increasing demand for natural resources a threat to life on earth. The situation is particularly dire since, Safin maintains, the world population is projected to increase to nine billion over the next 50 years and the disparity in wealth between rich and poor countries will lead to a geopolitical crisis. Safin explains, the hunger of starvation is terrible. But hunger results not only in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, it creates an ideological crisis. The solution to this crisis, Safin asserts, is Tatar Islam.

According to Safin—who writes that Tatar Islam is “simply Islam”—Tatar Islam is no more than a political term used to unite Tatar people. Nevertheless, Safin positions how Tatars practice Islam between the two extremes of “atheism” and “Islamism.” The key to living life correctly is balance. Safin elucidates his point:

In the Quran humankind is spoken of as the slave of Allah, on the one hand, and the Master of the planet, on the other. Do humans—Muslims among them—comprehend this? Does humankind correctly understand the relationship between being slave and

Master? The fate of humankind is tied to understanding this relationship. It has consequences for individual nations.

Allah has created Humankind as Master on Earth's surface. To be master is to direct, that is, to cause action. This requires freedom. God gave freedom to almighty Humans. So that Humans make proper use of freedom God gave us Reason. Real freedom is bound by the laws of nature. In order that we might understand those laws properly, Allah gave us the almighty Quran.⁵¹

Safin takes issue with overly zealous interpretations of the word "Islam," which literally means "submission (to Allah's will)." He complains that Muslims forget the need to balance out submission with mastery.

Many Muslims themselves do not understand this. They take pleasure in the word slavery and forget that they are Masters. They become too timid, and having fettered their desires, give themselves over to fanaticism. They change into brainless, weak-willed organic robots...this is why Muslim countries have fallen into a distressing state. [By contrast,] western-cultured peoples take pleasure in being Masters. They have embarked on the path of not heeding the divine lessons. But Allah is warning them as well. The dominance of western culture, founded upon atheism, today has brought human civilization to a global crisis. To be Master on Earth and, at the same time, to not forget that we are Allah's slaves, to know the correct relationship between the two is a Tatar trait.⁵²

Tatar yuly adherents suggest that the understanding of balance individuals acquire from studying the Quran should be cultivated in all aspects of life. This includes geopolitical affairs—lessening disparities in wealth, preserving the natural environment, and promoting peace—as well as in personal matters, including language use. Another member of the Tatar yuly movement, Farit Urazaev of the Tatar World Congress, explained in a 2001 interview that he delights in being a balanced Tatar-Russian bilingual, especially due to the two languages' mirrored syntax. Urazaev demonstrated the pleasure he derives from bilingualism by beginning an utterance in one language and, at its apex, switching into the other. He implied that his balanced bilingualism indicates his ability to counteract Russian hegemony with pride in his own nation, without having to become a national chauvinist. Maintaining balance is likewise key to negotiating with Moscow, as it has been through cultivating the middle way that Tatars have achieved Tatarstan's special status without bloodshed.

Because Tatar yuly is an all-embracing philosophical approach to living on Earth, Safin explains, it is the Tatar nation that will unite Eurasia and help the countries of western and central Europe, the Far East, India, and the Near and Middle East achieve balance in international relations.

This mission is not new for Tatars—it recalls Sultan-Galiev’s 1920s agenda with respect to Tatars’ role in building socialism. Even so, Safin’s claim has substance. For example, when in 1996 Russian missiles killed Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudaev with the aid of US tracking technology, Rafael Khakimov was attempting to arrange negotiations between Dudaev and Russian President Boris Yeltsin. Tatar yuly emphasizes Tatars’ roles as political brokers and interprets Islam progressively, which is why adherents consider their movement a legitimate offspring of Tatar jadidism.⁵³

Projecting Sovereignty

In addition to writing about sovereignty, Tatar nation-builders attempted to perform statehood through enacting Tatarstan national symbols.⁵⁴ Until 2000, the Tatarstan government had plans to issue its own passports.⁵⁵ The chief complaint about Russian passports was that transcribing Tatar names into Russian changes their meaning by eliding Tatar graphemes with phonological significance into undifferentiated Russian letters. For example, the Tatar name “Räsimmä” meaning “Woman Ruler” becomes “Rasima” in Russian. In losing its front vowels the name becomes meaningless.

In another attempt to project statehood, in 1999, approximately half the cars on the streets displayed Tatarstan license plates in place of Russian plates designating Tatarstan. Even at that time, the license plates didn’t have staying power. As Alexander Saligaev, Director of the Slavic Cultural Society, informed me, roadway police outside Tatarstan’s borders had a tendency to strip them from vehicles.



Figure 4.1. Tatarstan’s State Seal, the *ak bars*.

More successful symbols of state power have been the Tatarstan state seal, the *ak bars*, or “snow leopard,” and the Tatarstan flag. The snow leopard is an ancient symbol among Turkic people of Central Eurasia. Tatar artist and sculptor Rif Faxrutdynov won a competition to design the state seal, which was introduced in 1992. The white snow leopard in the seal is winged and wears a shield, representing his rule over the elements and his role as protector. His right paw is raised in an imperial gesture. He appears against a red sun disk said to signify the Bolgar Khanate.

Tatarstan adopted its flag in 1991. It was flown by law on the buildings of all government, public and private institutions, organizations, and enterprises in Tatarstan, as well as on ships. Like the *ak bars*, the colors of the flag are green, white, and red. Tatarstan government websites describe the colors’ significance as follows: green symbolizes spring and rebirth; white is purity; and red stands for maturity, energy, strength, and life. These interpretations are not, however, universal. In one specialized, but not specifically Tatar-language gymnasium in Kazan, a welcome-to-our-school display explained the significance of the flag’s colors as follows: green is for Islam; white is for religious purity; and red is for renewal. A self-proclaimed Tatar nationalist friend provided a third interpretation. He stated that green is the Islamic color of renewal; white signifies the pretty words of an imaginary peace; and red is included because ex-Communists want to display the correct color in case of a return to the old order.

During my fieldwork in 1999–2001, both the *ak bars* and the Tatarstan flag were ubiquitous in Tatarstan. Moreover, *Ak bars* became the name of the Tatarstan branch of the Russian National Bank, as well as the name of Kazan’s extremely popular hockey team. A Russian university administrator told me that the *ak bars* seal was stamped on Tatarstan university diplomas, which institutions in Moscow refused to recognize as legitimate. Less visible in Kazan was the city seal, a medieval Eurasian image of a dragon, significant because the image of St. George killing that dragon is a core Russian imperial symbol.

In addition to other symbols of statehood, Tatarstan introduced a national anthem in 1991. The chosen anthem wasn’t the melancholic song *Täftiläü*, advocated by the letter writer in Chapter 2, but rather an optimistic and stately major key arrangement written by established Tatar composer Rüstäm Yaxin. While Yeltsin encouraged the autonomous republics to adopt their own flags and constitutions in 1993, Tatarstan had already ratified a comprehensive constitution by 1992, a year before Russia approved its (post-Soviet) constitution.⁵⁶ In 2000, Putin’s government began coercing Tatarstan to modify the constitution to bring it into compliance

with Russia's subsequent legislation. The resulting document is a thin pamphlet.

Difficulties in Implementing Sovereignty

Even at the height of sovereignty's authority, significant disjunctures existed between the ideological programs for fomenting change and various levels of practice. First, not all intellectuals engaged in advancing social change in Tatarstan possessed the same clarity of vision as Khakimov, Safin, and the authors of the *National Doctrine*. Like everyone else, Tatar nation-builders have varied intellectual abilities and personal opinions that affect their responses to initiatives. Moreover, while Tatars believe in the importance of the collective, they simultaneously value the discussion of individual approaches to any and all issues, which can promote factionalism. Second, practitioners involved the quotidian implementation of sovereignty—among them, government bureaucrats and schoolteachers—unevenly possess the training and tools necessary for executing the changes their superiors desired. Third, many Tatarstan people resemble Äminä *xanym*, whose epigraph opened this chapter, and see no benefit in change. Beyond all this, even nation-builders with the greatest lucidity are impeded by what they deem colonial-period structures and attitudes, including those they have internalized.⁵⁷ To paraphrase Marx, Tatar nation-builders do not make history under circumstances chosen by themselves. Rather, anxiously conjured up spirits of the past dictate that revolutionizing Tatarstan's social and political order is at best an unsure process.

For one, a significant disjuncture exists between the breadth of vision shared by Khakimov and other ideologues and the authors of the Tatar language textbooks for Russian-speaking children. I spoke with several textbook authors. They declared that their materials teach oral proficiency in a variety of settings and situations—a departure from the Soviet-period approach to language pedagogy in which the focus is on grammar and translation. In fact, the exercises in their books continue to present Tatar as a code into and out of which to translate Russian sentences. The textbooks have little practical use and are not designed to engage children's imaginations or to appeal to Russian-speaking children's interests. Thus, tenth-graders enamored of MTV are asked to study provincial folksongs. In a representative example from one textbook the question "What will you eat?" appears in both languages, surrounded by colorless line draw-

ings of beets and carrots printed on poor quality, yellowed paper. Indeed, except for one volume written by the late Igor Litvinov, a non-Tatar whom Fliura Safiullina—Chair of the Department of Tatar Literature at Kazan University denounced for his audacity—the textbooks do not promote Tatar as a spoken, living language.⁵⁸

A second serious disjuncture arises because bilingual education was structured to reflect Soviet-period ideologies about the relations between language and nation, instead of the realities of linguistic knowledge. Assuming that ascribed nationality connotes knowledge of national language, Tatarstan's education system divides children into either "Tatar" or "Russian" groups. A fundamental problem with this system, complain the children's parents, is that it doesn't provide a place to learn Tatar for Tatar or mixed Tatar-Russian children who have little or no contact with Tatar language outside the classroom. The pedagogical methods applied to "Tatar" children presume that they are fluent in Tatar and that their school lessons only serve to augment their knowledge of the literary language. Few children who don't already know how to speak Tatar before beginning school learn to speak it there. Indeed, barring cases where the teachers are exceptionally lively, engaged, charismatic, and talented, children tend to complain that studying Tatar is drudgery. As a result, realizing the ideals of bilingual education in Tatarstan matches the reality common to school classrooms in other bilingual contexts.⁵⁹

Young Tatar nation-builders who achieved adulthood during perestroika often view their more Soviet-minded elders' efforts critically. For instance, one such nation-builder Nail Garipov, an urban born and bred Tatar historian, gave the following assessment of the difficulties of elevating Tatar from its previous status as a subordinate language. Garipov explained that Tatar is currently taught the way English used to be taught in the Soviet period. That is, children learn to translate texts from one language to another, but not to converse with a native speaker. Moreover, the Tatar language taught in schools is based on literary language and not the living vernacular. Therefore, getting children to study a subject for which they see no practical use is problematic.

Garipov also described the urban-rural divide, explaining that the ruralization of Tatar language over the course of the 20th century lowered its status. Many Tatar-speakers lack urban experience and haven't cultivated adequate defenses against city snobbism. Tatar teachers consequently have difficulty exciting interest in Tatar language among urban children. Garipov put it like this.

Most government people and teachers are from villages and their culture is different from urban culture. Teachers' level of cultural sophistication must be much higher than that of their pupils. But most rural people don't understand the psychology of urban dwellers and urban dwellers don't like Tatar pop culture.

His response to my request for clarification was as follows:

Having a high level of cultural sophistication means that a person can rise above Russian chauvinism. Urban dwellers include urban Tatar intellectuals, who are mostly russified and have technical or medical educations.

In contrast, Tatar's intellectual range is limited. Garipov clarified:

Tatar-language publications are geared towards villagers or first-generation urban dwellers. They repeat what's in official Russian-language sources without commentary. The Tatar classics were written in Arabic script and have not been republished recently.

According to Garipov, the russification of intellectual activity that began in the 1930s is continuing. Ten years of sovereignty didn't change the situation. Garipov pointed out why, "The same people are teaching Tatar history in 2000 as were teaching it before perestroika. From 1917 on, orders coming from Moscow have been obeyed. Tatars in high positions always have Russian secretaries."

Garipov's comment about Russian secretaries refers to a Soviet-period surveillance practice where party members from the national cadres at every level of government administration were "underseen" by ethnic Russian secretaries. This form of surveillance no longer exists universally. Rather, it mostly continues to persist metaphorically, since many Tatars have internalized the censorship that keeps them from stepping out of line with respect to the imagined wishes of Russians, not making declarations, for example, that peripheralize Russians. Aisylu's statement about her first visit to Turkey provides an indication of what it means to live with this specter.

With the advent of Tatarstan's sovereignty movement, Tatar supporters began to take measures towards placing ethnic Tatars in the republic's most prestigious political, cultural, and educational positions. They justified this action by pointing out that only Tatars know Tatarstan's two government languages and therefore possess the necessary qualifications to manage the republic's affairs. Making high-level positions "Tatar" resulted in a mad scramble among some Tatar bureaucrats to demonstrate their Tatariness, primarily indexed through their knowledge of the Tatar language. (Talented bureaucrats quickly learned the rules for excelling in

the new bureaucracy.) In the Soviet period, except for national cadres, like Tatarstan President Mintimir Shaimiev, bilingualism was counter indicated for success. Summing up the situation as he saw it when we spoke in 2000, Garipov stated:

Tatar in Tatarstan is like a poor homeless child. No one wants to use it. If a person enters an office and says a few words in Tatar, the people there think, "He's our man. He speaks Tatar." And then they speak Russian.

Garipov's observation regarding the new protocol for entering offices is accurate. On numerous occasions I both observed and participated in this ritual. Greetings are exchanged in Tatar, and then the rest of the conversation occurs in Russian.

Religious Tensions

Uneven linguistic abilities magnify the tensions inherent in pragmatic code choice. Other tensions—with respect to the religious freedom of Tatars and other Muslims—become greater the longer Vladimir Putin is in power. While Yeltsin impeded Tatarstan sovereignty, Putin actively sought to undo it and his government implemented measures that served to alienate Muslims from mainstream Russian society. Three phenomena that clearly highlight this alienation are the introduction of school lessons in Orthodox Christianity, conditions in the Russian military, and the requirements for obtaining a Russian domestic passport.

I first heard mention of the Russian government's desire to include a course on Orthodox Culture in school curricula at a Tatar national school conference in 2001. By the end of 2006, 75 of the 89 polities comprising the Russian Federation had instituted "The Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture." The course is supposed to be an elective, but in 19 regions children are required to take it. While a few education administrators, notably among them the Director of Moscow's Education Department, have objected to the course, suggesting that children should learn the religious history of all four of Russia's officially recognized faiths—Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism—no concrete steps have been taken in this direction.⁶⁰

In Russia, military conscription of eighteen-year-old men is universal. Less than 20% of those eligible actually serve in the army. Many young men aren't healthy enough to pass the military's lax physical examination

and everyone who can avoid conscription, either through paying bribes or getting admitted to a higher education institution, which can be the same thing.⁶¹ Since at least 1998, Fändäs Safiullin, Tatarstan Deputy to the Russian Duma and a former general in the Soviet Army, has been attempting to implement alternative service for Tatarstan conscripts.⁶² Safiullin and other Tatar nation-builders I spoke to about alternate service gave three specific reasons for wanting to introduce it. First, they would like to keep their sons from dying needlessly in Chechnya. Second, they want to protect Tatarstan men from forced participation in the genocide of their fellow citizens, as Tatar-speakers formulate it, occurring in Chechnya. Third, they hope to shield them from the Russian army's notorious hazing practice known as *dedovshchina*.

There has been considerable western press coverage of *dedovshchina*, an unofficial institution tacitly approved by Russian military commanders which results in the deaths, suicides, and maiming of thousands of new recruits each year. What the press doesn't report about *dedovshchina*, however, is that it makes particular targets out of national minorities and other outsiders—evidence of the prevalence of Russian national chauvinism in the army. Indeed, in the early 2000s, the army briefly experimented with constituting separate Orthodox units, sending Muslim recruits to non-combat and less prestigious construction battalions as a means of protecting them from hazing.⁶³ Even at the official level, Russian chauvinism prevails. While soldiers may attend Orthodox Church services and Orthodox clergy sprinkle holy water on soldiers of all faiths before the latter head into battle, Muslims are not allowed to perform the daily prayers called *namaz*, even in private. Nor are adherents of Judaism and Buddhism allowed to worship while serving in the Russian armed forces.

In the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse religiosity has increased among Russian citizens of all faiths. Among Muslim nationalities this means that young people study at *mādrāses*, mosque attendance has increased exponentially, and an increasing number of devout women have begun to cover their heads with scarves in public. Meanwhile, Soviet-period domestic passports are expiring and require replacement with new Russian Federation passports. The domestic passport is an essential piece of identification in Russia. It is required in every bureaucratic encounter, including spot checks by police, withdrawing a book from the library, buying a train or bus ticket, visiting a television or radio station, and paying utility bills.

Some devout Muslim women object to having to remove their headscarves for their passport photographs, and they took their claim to court.

After first responding that a person's ears, neck, and throat must be visible in order for her to be identifiable, in May 2003 the Russian government ruled to allow Muslims to wear their scarves in passport photographs. Opponents of headscarves vowed to overturn the decision and in July 2003 Russian authorities began to require women wishing to keep their heads covered in passport photographs to produce affidavits signed by their local imams attesting to their membership in a Muslim community. This legislation oddly presumes that women wishing to keep their headscarves on may be "inauthentic" Muslims. It also punishes Muslim women for devotion to their faith, for any woman not belonging to a specific mosque or who had difficulty obtaining the affidavit would effectively lose her civil rights. The legislation was quickly overturned later that month, but the rancor it created among devout indigenous Russian Muslims still remains.⁶⁴

Conclusions

In Kazan, social networks are constantly renewed, traditionally serving as crucially important means for navigating city bureaucracies. They are unusual in that Tatars and Russians maintain close ties, even when they espouse incompatible political views. In an expression of their continuing sense of entitlement, Russian-speakers feel comfortable instructing outsiders in how to perceive gender relations among Muslims. However, Tatar gender relations differ from what one might expect. As in all societies, women are expected to meet a higher standard of conduct than men, most clearly manifest in the need to remain calm, have patience and find a way out of difficult situations. Nevertheless, the same ethos is employed by Tatar nation-builders in their relations with Russia's central government in Moscow. Nation-builders pragmatically manipulate "the nation" to refer to various groups of people depending on context. While some Tatar nation-builders reflexively propose progressive, Muslim ideas that emerge from understanding Tatarstan's role as a subject of history to support the formation of a new Tatarstan national identity, these ideas are unevenly applied.

This chapter has explored Tatar cultural traits and beliefs that have borne an influence on Tatarstan nation-building ideologies. By stressing the post-colonial hegemony of ever more intrusive Russian rule, my discussion touches upon the inherent, unavoidable pitfalls of implementing Tatarstan sovereignty. As Tatar intellectuals attempted to promote sover-

eighty through bilingual education and symbols of statehood, the Russian government introduced measures that increasingly marginalized the country's Muslims in the spheres of elementary education, the armed forces, and participatory citizenship.

Other aspects of Tatarstan nation-building have included erecting a big symbol of Islam in Kazan's administrative center and attempting to introduce Tatar language into all of Kazan's speech domains. These are the topics I cover in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 This definition of culture resembles Bourdieu's (1986) *habitus*—a reworking of Marxian practice theory.
- 2 This bears some similarity to the relationships between clans and politics that Edward Schatz (2004) describes in Kazakhstan.
- 3 To measure the strength of the ties in Kazan Tatar-speakers' social networks, in 1999 I drew a chart of my acquaintances, marking down who introduced me to whom. Soon I started to ask new contacts whom they knew and also noted down these ties on the chart. After a few months, the chart had become such a busy crisscrossing of lines it ceased to be legible.
- 4 According to Saligaev, the Slavic Cultural Society advocates for "the maintenance of Russian culture." Saligaev's primary complaints are that children are not taught the values of Orthodox Christianity and that the time they spend studying Tatar in school denies them the opportunity to read Russian writers of tertiary importance (in my opinion), like Nikolai Leskov. Saligaev has been successful in pressuring the Tatarstan government to open special Russian lyceums.
- 5 These people include, most remarkably, scholars working for the Tatarstan Academy of Science's History Institute, headed by President Mintimir Shaimiev's former advisor, Rafael Khakimov.
- 6 See McAdoo (1997) *inter alia*.
- 7 When Tatars talk about their place in the world, habitually as one nation among others, they tend to conceive of themselves as located at the center of a series of concentric circles that describe relative degrees of inclusion. The way they arrange these circles varies, but frequently, neighboring Bashkirs are considered closest to the inner circle, despite the existence of mutual animosities. Other Turks—of Central Asia or Anatolia—or Muslims occupy the next circle outward, then Jews, then Russians and other ex-Soviet non-Muslims. Variation in which nations fill the circles depends upon the person, context, and how speakers seek to stress solidarity and social distance. This variation resembles the ways East Europeans calibrate the difference between public and private spheres depending not upon physical places, but on discursive projections of "us" and "them," elaborated upon in the next chapter.
- 8 Russians have used the purported backwardness of Muslims as a foil to leverage a role for themselves as intermediaries in relations with non-Soviets. An excellent example of this is provided by Russian ethnographer Sergei Poliakov's 1992 book *Everyday Islam*.

- 9 This has parallels with the ways that women's NGO representatives in Bulgaria, who like Arbatova have imported western cultural feminism wholesale, misrepresent relationships between Bulgarian men and women (Ghodsee 2005).
- 10 Devout Muslims perform *namaz* five times a day, but don't pray before eating the way that Christians do.
- 11 See Lemon (2000) on writer Alexander Pushkin and Russian nationalism.
- 12 This recalls the double consciousness W.E.B. DuBois describes among American blacks further developed in Morgan's (2002) description of the simultaneous multiple positionalities of speakers of African American English.
- 13 Geertz (1973) explains how culture creates particularized normalities that seem real and universal.
- 14 Muslims' scarves, my research assistant Dilbara carefully explained, must be Tatar and not Russian, which means that believers should purchase them at special religious stores attached to mosques and not from government-run department stores.
- 15 A *kalfak* is Tatar women's head covering, somewhat like a conical *yamika* worn on top of the head.
- 16 In reference to why they won't shake hands with women, Russian men sometimes invoke the following proverb, "Kura ne ptitsa, a zhenshchina ne chelovek [A chicken is not a bird and a woman is not a person]."
- 17 Unlike other regions of the former Soviet Union—Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, the Baltic Republics, and elsewhere—in Tatarstan there were only one or two reported incidents of inter-ethnic strife during the Soviet Union's collapse.
- 18 In addition to evidence of this in Chapter 1, see Geraci (2001), who notes that up until the 1870s disagreements between Russians and Tatars often ended in bloodshed and rioting.
- 19 While I was living in Kazan in 1999, my fiancé, who was supposed to join me, suffered a serious illness. After discovering he was too ill to fly, I cried and Hayat *apa* admonished me, for, she explained, it could bring him worse luck.
- 20 Ironically, one of the Tatar girls at the Lab School told me Russians think Tatars are always fighting because, as she put it, their speech has emotional intonation.
- 21 This is true in other Muslim societies (Bringa 1995). However, unlike Bringa's description of Bosnia, in Tatarstan pre-menopausal Tatar women do attend funerals.
- 22 For example, the Russian woman I lived with in St. Petersburg in 1993 was very concerned about my lack of desire to marry, until she found out that I had lived with a boyfriend for four years. For her, our having lived together was close enough to marriage to assuage her concern that I might miss out on womanhood.
- 23 Tatars' stricter sexual mores are evident, *inter alia*, from the fact that Tatar women don't wear translucent shirts without brassieres, as many Russian women do. In a conflict that illustrates where the boundaries of Tatar propriety lie, Tatar singer Ilsiye Bädärätin's songs are banned from Kazan's airwaves in part because she sings a song about a Tatar streetwalker—a phenomenon outside the perception of proper Tatar society.
- 24 Pesmen (2000); Ries (1997).
- 25 See Graney (2009).
- 26 Turkish recognition of sovereignty meant that people from Tatarstan, like citizens of the Turkic republics in Central Asia, at least until 1998 could enter Turkey without a visa. This is based on information presented in a lecture on Tatarstan by Ruzel

- Yusupov, Rector of Kazan State Pedagogical University, at the University of Washington, 14 August 1998. I attempted to contact the Turkish consulate in Kazan for confirmation in May 2003, but received no response to my inquiry.
- 27 See one of Tatarstan's official websites, http://www.kcn.ru/tat_en/, for details. Tatarstan has twenty-six economic trade representations. They are located in six other autonomous regions within the Russian Federation (Bashkortostan, Nizhniy Novgorod region, St. Petersburg and Leningrad oblast', Sverdlovsk region, Saratov region, and the Khanty-Mansiysky Autonomous Region); six former Soviet republics (Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus', and Russia); four former Soviet satellites (Cuba, Vietnam, the Czech and Slovak Republics, and Poland); and ten other foreign states (Iraq, Switzerland, Austria, France, Italy, Cyprus, USA, Finland, Australia, and Turkey) in the latter three of which there are also significant Tatar diasporas.
 - 28 On self-determination see Lenin (1927[1914]) and Martin (2001). See Malik (1994) for a thorough discussion of the processes through which this legitimacy was created.
 - 29 Wertheim (2003).
 - 30 This argument was made by ethnologist Damir Iskhakov at a conference on Russian Federalism held at the Tatarstan Academy of Science's History Institute on 25 February 2000 and also in Xalit (1997). It was incorporated into the July 2007 agreement with Moscow.
 - 31 Evidence for which may be found in Rorlich (1986).
 - 32 Nor is authorship in other contexts as a rule individual. See Bakhtin (1991) and Goffman (1991), *inter alii*. Among the works examined here, however, its multiplicity is documented.
 - 33 Tolstaya (1992: 29).
 - 34 "Dissident writer Solzhenitsyn returns," BBC News, 27 May 1994.
 - 35 Ethnos is the term for a biological category Soviet ethnologists use to generalize beyond any concrete examples of ethnicity or nation. Here Khakimov is writing against a definition of ethnos by Bromlei (1984) and Bromley and Kozlov (1989), as well as Stalin's definition of a nation (1950). Khakimov (1993: 20).
 - 36 Khakimov (1993: 20).
 - 37 Khakimov (1993: 32).
 - 38 Khakimov (1993: 40).
 - 39 History Institute (1998: 4).
 - 40 History Institute (1998: 5).
 - 41 History Institute (1998: 12)
 - 42 History Institute (1998: 8).
 - 43 History Institute (1998: 3).
 - 44 History Institute (1998: 4).
 - 45 History Institute (1998: 13–14).
 - 46 History Institute (1998: 6)
 - 47 History Institute (1998: 7).
 - 48 History Institute (1998: 9).
 - 49 The inscription reads, "*Bu kitapta tatar ideologiiiasy nigezläre bar.*"
 - 50 Safin (2001: 5).
 - 51 Safin (2001: 88).
 - 52 Safin (2001: 89–90).

- 53 See Chapter 1 and Gasprinskii (1985[1881]), Khalid (1998), Kazanly (1960), Kuttner (1975), Lazzarini (1973, 1975, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1997), and Sultan-Galiev (1984) for more on jadidism as an ideology and movement.
- 54 For a thorough discussion of Tatarstan nation-builders' projections of sovereignty, see Graney (2009).
- 55 The 2007 agreement states that Tatarstan people can request special Tatar-language inserts for their Russian passports.
- 56 Malik (1994).
- 57 The ways in which former Soviets are fettered by hegemonic structures recalls Virginia Woolf's (1929) statements regarding the need for freedom of the mind in order for creative processes to occur.
- 58 A retired English teacher from Kazan's Veterinarian Academy and a Belarusian Jew for whom Yiddish was the mother tongue, Litvinov (now deceased) told me in a 2000 interview that he felt compelled to write *Ia nachinaiu govorit' po-tatarski* because he was appalled by the low quality and ineffectiveness of the textbooks his granddaughter was using to study Tatar in school.
- 59 See for example Jaffe (1993), McDermott and Tylbor (1995), Philips (1983), and Trudgill (1975).
- 60 "School Classes on Orthodox Christianity Introduced in More Regions." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, <http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2006/08/1-rus/rus-310806.asp>.
- 61 There is some evidence that, in Dagestan, parents bribe army officials to post their sons close by, in their own regions (Sieca-Kozłowski 2009).
- 62 As of 2004 alternative military service has been instituted—it lasts 3.5 years as opposed to two.
- 63 Op. cit. 2009.
- 64 See *Izvestiya's* online article on the topic at <http://www.izvestia.ru/news/news54754>.

CHAPTER 5

REPOSSESSING KAZAN

“Since the Millennium the spirit of Kazan has changed. It’s no longer a provincial city.”

Young Tatar journalist, 3 July 2006

Recalling Yakovlev’s proposal in 1928 to allocate greater administrative resources to economically and culturally dominant Soviet nationalities, it is understandable how controlling a city provides a nationality symbolic dominance over a broader territory. Not by accident then, beginning in 1986, Tatar nation-builders—most of whom migrated from Tatar-dominant villages in the 1960s and 1970s—attempted to repossess Kazan in a number of ways. Their measures included instituting bilingual education; increasing the number and breadth of periodicals published in Tatar; implementing a slight increase in the number of hours of television programming in Tatar and drawing up plans for an all-Tatar channel; changing the order of local news broadcasts so that the Tatar one airs before the Russian one; opening a second Tatar theater in Kazan; proposing other projects to promote Tatar and other non-Russian cultures; and encouraging russophone government bureaucrats to take government-sponsored Tatar language courses.¹ During sovereignty’s heyday, these efforts tended to be ignored, discounted, and occasionally resisted by people oriented towards Russian language and culture, revealing the resilience of Russian colonial attitudes and the fragility of Tatarstan political authority.

This chapter moves from the topic of intellectuals’ idealistic conceptions concerning how to create a Tatarstan nation to the question of how these concepts play out on the ground. It focuses on physical and linguistic changes to Kazan’s urban terrain, first discussing Tatar-speakers’ repossession of Kazan through monumental building projects and then describing how Tatar language has gone public.

From Republic to City

Kazan residents are generally pleased by the improvements in how their city looks. A Russian-speaking Tatar bureaucrat I met in 2000, while observing his Tatar-language class, told me that the ways Kazan has changed gives him endless pleasure.² “Before,” he explained, “I only liked to drive around my city at night because then you couldn’t see all the grime.” Similarly, an ethnic Russian teacher whose husband drove me home from an evening event at the Lab School in the fall of 1999 smiled with evident pride as we discussed the ways in which Kazan had become beautiful since the onset of sovereignty. When I returned to Kazan after its Millennium celebrations in 2005 everyone I encountered expressed delight in the city’s beautification. While these changes to the city’s face have had the overall effect of transforming Kazan from a muddy provincial backwater to a desirable tourist destination in the eyes of local inhabitants, many of them have been the subject of controversies that illustrate both how the distribution of wealth and power shakes out inequitably in the post-socialist period and the difficulties of projecting Tatarstan sovereignty.

Kazan’s beautification was a cornerstone of Tatarstan sovereignty. After the 1990 Declaration, the Tatarstan government drastically cut the amount of money it paid into Moscow’s coffers and began to invest some of the revenues generated from natural resources, industry, and tax collection in Tatarstan’s infrastructure. During this period, in addition to local education and ethnic organizations, the government funded a gasification project to bring central heating to village homes; the restoration of historical landmarks, including houses of worship; and the transformation of Kazan into a capital city in which Tatarstan people could take pride. Kazan’s beautification falls into two periods with differently valenced significances—those made as a component of Tatarstan’s projection of sovereignty (1990–2000) and those made in preparation for Kazan’s Millennium celebrations (2001–2005). Although some construction straddles the two periods, both chronologically and ideologically, all the building projects eventually became leached of their symbolism as representations of Tatarstan’s political viability and imbued with the depoliticized showcase spirit of Kazan as a culturally Tatar city. As part of this process, Tatarstan’s Day of the Republic on August 30 turned into Kazan’s Anniversary as a city, and Kazan’s Millennium, originally planned to commemorate Tatars’ long political presence in the region, was celebrated on that day.

Kazan's New Face



Figure 5.1. Kazan Kremlin from Below

Among the construction projects central to Tatarstan sovereignty were developing the park within the Kazan Kremlin, which became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000; building the Tatar State Humanitarian University on the Tatar side of Lake Bulak, opened in 2005; constructing the first five stations of the Kazan Metropolitan, beginning in 1997; and erecting Kol Shārif Mosque, the largest in Russia. Projects more closely connected to presenting Kazan as a showcase city include opening the first remote branch of the Hermitage Museum in the Kazan Kremlin, designed and realized by TAIF—a consortium in which President Shaimiev's son Radik plays a key role; erecting the Millennium Bridge across the Kazanka River; creating *Tugan Avylym* [My native village], a restaurant compound that emulates an idealized Tatar village; fashioning the paved pedestrian Petersburg Street, the design of which recalls that city's canals and bridges; and completing the *Yanga Ippodrom* [The new hippodrome], a colossal entertainment complex that contains a horse racetrack, fairgrounds, and indoor exhibition space. In preparation for the Millennium Kazan also renovated the old TSUM department store by the train station and built a new three-story department store on Bauman Street. Both buildings have escalators, a novelty to which Kazanians have quickly adapted. (Previously, they had to travel to Moscow to ride on one.) In addition,

dozens of new office buildings went up in the city center—most of which still stood empty with large “For Rent” signs in their windows a year after the celebrations were over.

The cost of fixing up the city for the Kazan Millennium was stupendous—250 billion rubles (over \$9.5 billion) were spent over four years. Seventeen billion rubles alone (over half a billion US dollars) were invested in building the world’s most expensive subway line—8.7 km of track, which is richly decorated with exquisite tile mosaics of figures from Tatar folklore. Since the money culled from taxes not paid to Moscow no longer existed, funding had to come in the form of sponsorship by European companies—for example, the British computer corporation Oracle contributed at least £40,000 through the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions—and loans from Moscow banks.

Perhaps the most successful sovereignty-building project was the creation of a downtown pedestrian mall, modeled after the Arbat in Moscow, out of Bauman Street—previously a busy, grimy thoroughfare. A half-dozen blocks in length, Bauman quickly became Kazan’s central promenading destination for outdoor amusement, noisy entertainment and fun. Bauman Street is home to stores so expensive they are referred to as museums and merchants with folding tables selling religious souvenirs and pirated foreign movies and music with lyrics they don’t understand. Young women dress up and flock to Bauman Street to promenade and drink beer. Rock musicians set up their equipment and jam on Bauman in the summertime and Tatar pensioner women play sad songs on accordions there year round. Azeris working in the central bazaar selling clothes that arrive in Kazan through endless networks of brothers go to Bauman Street on their days off looking for a little fun, as do rowdy drunken sailors on Russia’s Naval Forces Day. Kazan’s first McDonalds sits on Bauman Street next to one of the city’s few automatic teller machines. Turkish, Tatar, and other cafés line it. Tourists have their pictures taken in front of Bauman’s many fountains as souvenirs of their visit to Kazan.

The opinion among Kazan’s entrepreneurs seems to be that the entertainment market is endlessly expanding. Around 2004, Radik Shaimiev completed building a pyramid-shaped structure covered in reflective black glass touted, while under construction, as a future entertainment center for the people. At that time, some Kazanians were excited by the prospect of an indoor venue they could visit during the long winters when their apartments become claustrophobic, but they have been disappointed. When I went to visit the Pyramid in 2006, the security guard at the door didn’t want to let me pass through the metal detector and enter the build-

ing until, speaking accented Russian, I exclaimed, “I’m American and I’ve heard so much about the Pyramid. I just have to take a look around!” This was the kind of ploy required to gain entrance to elite Russian establishments (five-star marble hotels and stores selling western goods) in the early 1990s. It was like stepping back in time. Dark like the interior of a sarcophagus, the Pyramid’s grim interior recalled Soviet restaurants—empty all the time but with no room for outsiders. Its luxury services—a beauty spa, a bowling alley, billiards, a discotheque, a fitness center, a bar with a nautical theme—are priced out of range for all but Kazan’s richest residents.³ The Pyramid revives Soviet-period caste-like divisions between the privileged few and ordinary citizens.⁴



Figure 5.2. The Pyramid

Radik Shaimiev’s company TAIF was also granted property rights to one of Kazan’s finest buildings, the grand Dom Kekina, a prerevolutionary structure erected by Volga German businessman L. V. Kekin in 1903–1904. Before 1917, the building’s ground floor housed shops, with apartments located on the upper three stories. In 2001, it was still abandoned—boarded up and full of broken glass. By 2006, it had been renovated. It was gorgeously appointed with a high-end private beer hall and a men’s clothing boutique. The Tatar-Bashkir Service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty had taken up residence on the top floor, but most of the building still stood empty and large “For Rent” sign adorned one face of the building.



Figure 5.3. Dom Kekina, with “For Rent” Banner

Spaces designed to promote sovereignty are often exploited for other purposes. Perched up high above the banks of the Kama River in the center of one of Kazan’s most pleasant garden districts is what used to be the Lenin Monument. Now renamed the National Cultural Center, the building houses a museum full of artifacts from Tatar history. On display are costumes from different eras, volumes of ethnography about Tatars, and a half-brick, said to be the last remnant of the Kazan Kremlin to survive Ivan the Terrible’s assault in 1552. The exhibition is significant because it presents archaeological evidence for the existence in Kazan of an established government—signifying civilization to Soviets—predating the Russian invasion. Organized school fieldtrips to the exhibition could constitute part of a strategy to quell complaints by Tatar parents concerned their children lack national self-respect. But the building only seems to open for special events. Indeed, the one time I managed to see the exhibition in 1998, it was my third attempt to gain admittance to the museum. My landlady had a personal contact among the building staff who let me in and turned on the lights in the exhibition hall. The implicit prestige I had as a

foreign guest swayed both my landlady and her personal contact to extend me hospitality. Otherwise, I may have never seen the half-brick and other artifacts.⁵



Figure 5.4. Wreckage in the Old Tatar Quarter

In addition to installing gas lines in village homes without central heating, the Tatarstan government engaged in a program to improve housing conditions within Kazan, similar to Khrushchev's campaign in the 1960s to provide self-contained living quarters for people living in communal apartments. The Tatarstan campaign targets people living in prerevolutionary wooden structures wired for electricity, but without indoor plumbing or central heating, who are moved from their residences in the center of town to apartments located on its outskirts. Relocation occurs by decree—residents have no say over when and where they move or, indeed, whether they agree to do so. The structures the government demolishes predate 1917 and usually feature antique architectural elements, like elaborately hand-carved wooden buttresses and window frames of an artisanal quality no longer produced.⁶ In their place modern multi-storied apartment buildings with underground parking designed for sale to Kazan's nouveau riche and high-level government bureaucrats are erected.

One of the Tatars who organized Tatar discotheques at the National Cultural Center told me that there had been a proposal in the 1990s to make one of Kazan's oldest streets, located between the Kremlin and the Parliament and close to the National Cultural Center, into an outdoor museum. However, the authorities decided the plan was too expensive. The only new construction on the street was a block of apartments for government bureaucrats who had become affluent from the privatization of state-owned property and industries.

As in the 19th century, the Old Tatar Quarter hosts Kazan's central food, clothing, and household goods bazaars. By the 1990s, it had an Islamic University, half a dozen mosques, and several *mādrāse*. According to Tatar ethnologist Damir Isxakov, the population of this section of the city—some six thousand people—is approximately 40% ethnic Tatar, which constitutes the most demographically homogenous concentration of people in Kazan. In the late 1990s, Isxakov and a colleague, Yagfar Garipov, proposed creating a “Tatar Reservation” there—all irony intended. They suggested that culturally Tatar types of activities should be encouraged in the Old Tatar Quarter, first and foremost by prohibiting alcohol consumption within the Quarter's boundaries. Their proposal never advanced past the stage of being drafted on paper, its state in the summer of 2000. Since then, the Quarter's antiquated houses have fallen into a state of increasing disrepair and many retain only their exterior façades. There is a lot of public grumbling about the Tatar Quarter's decay, especially concerning the irretrievable shambles into which German ethnographer Karl Fuchs' house has fallen.

By the time of Kazan's Millennium celebrations, Shaimiev had lost popular support among both Tatar- and Russian-speakers, high in the 1990s when he was lauded by most for his ability to maintain peace in Tatarstan. Particular complaints came in the form of criticism of his son's activities, including Radik's monopoly over Tatarstan's Tatneft gas stations. As a Russian cab driver tactfully elucidated the problem during a taxi ride in 2006, “How is it that thousands of years of geological activity should come to be in the ownership of a single individual?”

“Reconstructing” Kol Shārif Mosque

Each substantial change to Kazan's appearance has incurred some amount of controversy. The next part of this chapter concerns a big change to the city's landscape, one that was multiply contentious. This is the “recrea-

tion” of Kol Shārif Mosque, destroyed in 1552 by Ivan the Terrible. Poised on the edge of the hill that overlooks several of Kazan’s main thoroughfares and visible from most parts of the city and several miles downstream on the waters of the Volga River, Kol Shārif Mosque dominates Kazan’s horizon.⁷ The controversies surrounding its construction may demonstrate better than any other Tatarstan example the difficulties of putting nation-building ideals into practice.

Kol Shārif Mosque is important to the Tatarstan government and individual Tatars for at least two reasons. The first is that it promotes religiosity. Tatar nation-builders deem atheism responsible for the immoral behavior that took place during the Soviet period. They advocate a view that people without religious faith are unreliable because they have no moral foundation.⁸ Nation-builders regard the high rates of church attendance among Americans, which they equate with religious devotion, as the basis for our prosperity as a nation and what they perceive as a largely crime-free society and a history without genocide. Nation-builders consequently avow that part of decolonization should consist in promoting faith among people in Tatarstan by building houses of worship, one for every village. This for them is an essential step in developing a society rooted in the morality that undergirds physical and emotional health and economic well-being.

By the late 1980s, Kazan’s one functioning mosque stood in the old Tatar Quarter, in tsarist times considered remote from local centers of power and to this day associated with the filth of the bazaar.⁹ There were only two other mosques in the republic. In 1998, a government official informed me that 300 mosques, 100 churches, and 20 other houses of worship had been constructed.¹⁰ By the time Kol Shārif Mosque opened in 2005, Tatarstan had 1,014 mosques—50 in Kazan alone—and 176 other houses of worship.¹¹

Kol Shārif likewise has importance as a major project to promote Tatar culture and, as Tatar nation-builders see it, balance out the hegemony of Russian cultural influence. Because Tatars equate Tatar culture with Islam, erecting a big image of Islam constituted an essential symbolic step in the project to repossess Kazan as a Tatar city.¹² The mosque’s location within the walls of the Kazan Kremlin—itself both the seat of the Tatarstan government and a museum—which has only housed churches since 1552, is profoundly and intentionally significant.

Slippery Nations

Erecting Kol Shārif—locally referred to as its “recreation”—was overseen by the Kol Shārif Foundation. The foundation coordinated a government-sponsored project to collect funds and oversee the design of the mosque and its construction by Turkish builders. During construction, the Kol Shārif Foundation was housed in the same building in the Kremlin as the foundation to restore the Russian Orthodox Annunciation Cathedral—Blagoveshchensky Sobor—built in 1561–1562 to commemorate Ivan the Terrible’s conquest of Kazan. President Shaimiev issued the edicts decreeing the restoration of both buildings in 1995. In July 2005 the Our Lady of Kazan Icon, returned to Russia by Pope John Paul II before his death, was installed in Annunciation Cathedral in a ceremony involving Shaimiev, Patriarch Alexius II, and 10,000 Christian pilgrims.

I met with the director of the Kol Shārif Foundation, Fadbir Safin, a pleasant, but rather nondescript government bureaucrat in July 2000. Safin spoke a few lines to me in Tatar at the beginning of our conversation, but clearly felt more at ease speaking Russian and stopped stumbling over his words once we switched languages. He informed me that before Ivan the Terrible’s conquest of Kazan in 1552 the Kremlin contained five mosques, which were subsequently replaced by Russian Orthodox cathedrals. He said that Orthodox Christians were the only of Kazan’s four major religious communities—Muslim, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, and Lutheran—represented there until Kol Shārif began to be “recreated” in 1996.¹³

When I first visited the Kol Shārif Foundation’s offices, Safin gave me the organization’s website address and told me to come back with questions after I had looked at it. The website—no longer live—had versions in Russian and English.¹⁴ It provided material about the history of Kol Shārif Mosque, the stages of its construction, citations from President Shaimiev’s edict, and information on how to donate to the Foundation. Asserting the centrality of the mosque’s construction to Tatarstan nation-building, the Russian-language Main Page opened thus:

Kol Shārif Mosque’s re-creation ranks on a par with the Republic of Tatarstan’s Declaration of Sovereignty in terms of its significance and scale of accomplishment by enriching and imbuing the Declaration with concrete substance.¹⁵

The page on Historical Information concluded in the same vein. “Since that time [1552], the nation has been remembering the legendary image of

the mosque.” The declaration that the mosque’s re-creation is in the interest of all the people of Tatarstan, regardless of age, occupation, or ethnicity appeared in both the English and Russian versions, while the claim that Kol Shārif represents “the symbol of Islam in Russia” was asserted only in the English-language version.¹⁶

Although the Kol Shārif website promised that donors’ names “will remain in the hearts of contemporaries and thankful progeny and will enter the Memory Book and be eternalized on a Memorial Plaque in the mosque,” it didn’t identify any of them.¹⁷ When I asked Safin who the donors were, he responded, in oblique Soviet bureaucrat style, that they were primarily *kolkhozes*—collective farms—and organizations of oil workers, as well as “some private individuals.” (Meanwhile, it was common knowledge among Kazanians which local businessmen, politicians, and who among their acquaintances had made contributions to the foundation.) When I pressed Safin regarding the identities of these individuals, he declined to reveal them. Instead, he obviated the question by explaining that the private individuals included not only Muslims, but also Russians, Jews, and a delegation of Volga Germans.

Citations from different pages of the Kol Shārif website point out the larger contradictions in the Tatarstan government’s nation-building project. The use of the term “nation” on the historical page begs the questions of what nation this refers to, envisioned by whom, and inclusive of whom. Certainly, no Tatar nation existed in the 16th century.¹⁸ However, this isn’t the crux of the matter. For even if Tatarstan’s present-day Tatar-speaking or ethnic Tatar or Muslim communities—which comprise three different, if overlapping, groups of individuals—could be determined to descend directly from the people of the Kazan Khanate, nearly half of Tatarstan’s population would be excluded from the nation. Meanwhile, Tatarstan’s official ideology includes all nations living on the republic’s territory. Accordingly, the first article of Tatarstan’s original 1992 Constitution begins, “The Republic of Tatarstan is a sovereign democratic government, expressing the will and interests of the whole multi-ethnic people of the republic.”¹⁹ Inclusiveness is moreover indicated by the use of Russian and English on the Kol Shārif website to the initial exclusion of Tatar, which 9.2% of Tatarstan’s ethnic Russian population conceded knowing in 2002.²⁰ Tatar nation-builders have never resolved this discrepancy.

Contested Designs

Erecting Kol Shārif Mosque was enshrouded in several controversies, all of which concerned not alienating ethnic Russians. Two of these involved the structure's design. Shibhaddin Mārjani, the 19th-century Tatar historian, wrote that the 16th-century mosque had eight minarets, but little else is known about its appearance or where exactly it was located on the Kremlin's hilltop.²¹ One condition of Kol Shārif's "recreation" the Tatarstan government eventually came to accept was that the mosque not overshadow the role of Christianity in the republic by standing higher than any of the churches located nearby.²² This concession caused displeasure among Tatar-speakers because the need to take height into consideration in order to accommodate Russians belied the assertion the second Kol Shārif Mosque was a recreation of the first.

A second design controversy pertained to the religious symbolism of the structure. In 1996 an architectural competition was held to determine the plan for the new mosque, but, due to predictable tensions provoked by erecting an enormous Islamic symbol in the heart of Tatarstan's government, the blueprint was modified after building began. The new blueprint possessed what Safin described to me as a Muslim foundation—two squares superimposed upon each other at forty-five degree angles—and a cupola resembling a khan's crown atop a structure shaped like a tulip. The sides of the building on the lower level are composed of pointed arches, which, Safin said, looks simultaneously like an open Quran and a Russian Orthodox cathedral. The latter was important, Safin stressed, because Tatarstan is a multinational republic. While some Tatar-speakers accepted the accommodationism apparent in the mosque's modified design, others complained that the project had lost its original symbolic thrust. They didn't want their symbol of Islam to look like a church.

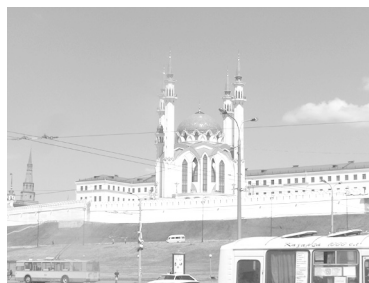


Figure 5.5. Kol Shārif Mosque, with Söyembike Tower in background

The Controversy over Bones

The largest controversy surrounding Kol Shārif's construction, however, had nothing to do with how it was built, but rather involved the ground on which it was to stand. When workers began excavations to lay the mosque's foundations, they discovered human bones in the soil.²³ Popular sentiment among Tatar-speakers, fueled by newspaper articles printed in the Tatar-language press, held that the bones belonged to "Tatar" soldiers who had died defending the Kremlin during Ivan the Terrible's conquest. People who expressed this opinion claimed that not giving the remains a proper burial demonstrated the conquerors' extreme brutality, and for some, "Russian" brutality in general.

When I asked Safin about the bones during our 2000 interview, he denied that they belonged to Kazan's defenders. First, he said that there had been a monastery on that site in the 18th century and that excavators had discovered its graveyard. Then, he said the bones probably belonged to Whites who fought against the Reds during the Civil War (1917–1922), adding that bones cannot be preserved for five centuries. "They only last a hundred years," he assured me. Both Safin's explanations for the skeletons' existence made them "Russian," or at least not chiefly "Tatar." The first undoes Tatar-speakers' accusations that Russians treated human remains without due respect. The second lays blame at the feet of the Bolsheviks, whose reputation is already sullied, taking the heat off Russians, imagined in this context as a population of post-1552 invaders. Safin's statements reflect his position as a bureaucrat and hence a public representative of the Tatarstan government, who must simultaneously straddle different, sometimes competing, demands for representation by local Tatars and Russians, while enduring yet other pressures from Russia's central government in Moscow.

Despite Safin's assertions, Kazan's Tatar-speakers maintain their own opinions about the provenance of the Kremlin bones. The week after I spoke with Safin, I stumbled across two unknown-soldier memorials for the defenders of the Kazan Khanate, one in the Tatar Cemetery and the other among some graves in a corner of Kazan's Gorky Park.²⁴ When I asked acquaintances about the monuments, they affirmed that the bones found on Kol Shārif's construction site were Tatar and had consequently required proper interment. They explained that TOTs members had brought a truck to the site—which is restricted to all but government vehicles—loaded the bones into it, and buried them during a special ceremony.

In July 2001 I returned to the Kazan Kremlin and interviewed Fayaz Xüjin, the chief archaeologist in charge of the excavations of the Kremlin. I encountered a diminutive man with a sunny countenance and a calm, self-assured demeanor. Employed by the History Institute, which is part of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, Xüjin, like Safin, receives his salary from the Tatarstan government. I found out later that Xüjin enjoys a high level of respect among other Tatar scholars as an honest man.

Unlike Safin, Xüjin allowed me to conduct the entire interview in Tatar. During our interview, which took place in his office on a Saturday afternoon, I mostly listened. Xüjin talked for nearly two hours, careful to provide straightforward answers to my questions. He explained that once UNESCO declared the Kremlin a World Heritage site the Russian government began to value his team's archaeological work. He told me that a monastery had indeed stood in the 18th century on the site where Kol Shārif was going up. However, beneath the stratum that corresponded to the 18th century, about a meter below today's topsoil, they had discovered a layer where everything was charred. It extended over the entire area of the Kremlin. The charred stratum corresponded to 1552 and it contained bones.

The following week I met with Niyaz Xalit, a round-faced man of middle stature with a blustering manner and Director of the Kremlin as an Open-Air Museum. I went to see Xalit with a friend of mine, Güzel, who works at the National Museum. She said that the meeting would be of interest to her, but it turned out that she was also hoping for some work freelancing as a tour guide. Xalit began our conversation in Tatar. After a few sentences, like Safin, he switched to Russian. While we were still speaking Tatar, Xalit complained that he had been unemployed during the Soviet period for being a dissident. After the interview, Güzel told me that that was hogwash. "He was a bureaucrat then too," she said. When I asked him about the bones, Xalit took a different spin from either Safin or Xüjin. He immediately protested, "That was a mistake, but we rectified it as quickly as we could. We didn't realize they were human. But, as soon as we did, we gave them a proper burial in a Russian cemetery." Confused by Xalit's response, I asked why they took the bones to a Russian cemetery if they were Tatar. He replied, "The bones were all mixed up. There were even animal bones among them, but they were primarily Russian. The site was the graveyard of a Russian monastery." I told Xalit that I had met with Xüjin a few days earlier and that he had informed me the bones were definitely from the period when Ivan IV had conquered Kazan. Xalit bristled with what seemed feigned anger, saying that he had to meet with

Xüjin later that day and that he would inform him that they were Russian bones. This outburst had its probable intended effect. I didn't want to cause the archaeologist any trouble and so I immediately stopped asking pointed questions.

At the end of our meeting, Xalit called in a couple of his tour guides, a young man and woman, both in their early twenties, and introduced me to them. He made a point of specifying that his guides had to be able to give tours in both Russian and Tatar, as well as in some third, foreign, language. As a way, it seemed, of heading off any protests from me that requiring bilingualism might constitute discrimination against Russians, he proclaimed, "Russians have had ten years to learn Tatar. It's their own fault if they haven't done so."

I soon discovered that Xalit had made beneficial use of those ten years. When I mentioned the meeting to my Tatar teacher a day or two later, she asked whether Xalit had done the interview in Russian or Tatar. I replied that the interview had begun in Tatar, but the majority of it had taken place in Russian. She said that this wasn't surprising because Xalit had only started studying Tatar within the past few years. "Until sovereignty," she added, "he had been completely russophone."

The day after our interview I decided to dodge Xalit's bullying tactics and try to learn more about the bones by taking tours of the Kremlin. Because the explanations offered for the bones' existence differed dramatically depending upon the language in which they were offered, I planned to do the tour twice, once in Russian and once in Tatar, to see if the guides told different stories in each language. So as to remain anonymous, I asked my research assistant Gulnaz, a bilingual Tatar college student, to telephone the number Xalit had given me. Shortly thereafter, Gulnaz called to tell me that the woman who answered at the Open-Air Museum would need some time to find a guide to give a tour in Tatar, but that we could have a tour in Russian the following day at noon.

We arranged to meet our guide just outside the Kremlin on the square where the monument to Tatar poet Musa Jälil stands. The tour guide specified that she would be wearing red shoes and a colorful skirt. We spotted her instantly—a short woman with short brown hair and glasses, in red shoes. The tour guide greeted us in Russian. Turning away from the guide I asked Gulnaz, in Tatar, to ask questions for me. The simplest way to keep the guide from discovering I was a nosy American seemed to be to avoid talking to her, since she would eventually notice my accent. However, this ploy turned out to be both awkward and ridiculous, since the guide understood the questions I put to Gulnaz in Tatar and answered in Russian.



Figure 5.6. Söyembike Tower, inside the Kazan Kremlin

The guide told us that a school group would be joining us for the tour and so the three of us walked through Spassky Tower's whitewashed archway and entered the Kremlin, where we joined up with a busload of elementary school children and their teachers. The tour was dull at first—it was one of those too hot July days when the humidity causes feet to swell and the road grit infiltrates the openings in sandals and lodges between toes. A lot of the children looked just as bored as I was and their teachers kept admonishing them to behave and pay attention. Suddenly, I noticed that the teachers were scolding the children not only in Russian, but also, it seemed, in Tatar. I asked Gulnaz whether the children were Tatar and she said she wasn't sure. "Some of the children seem as if they might be Russian." I watched their interactions a little longer and slowly it dawned on me that everyone was Tatar, even the little boy with the platinum hair and the foxlike narrow face. Before I was absolutely certain, we arrived at the spot considered to be the site of the original Kol Shārif Mosque, across the lane from the contemporary building site. The tour guide stopped and addressed the children, "Here stood the mosque of our

people. Our ancestors defended it to the last man.” Apparently, she already knew that the children were all Tatar, having been informed which village the group came from.

As we started to walk towards the location where the Turkish workers were fashioning the minarets for the new Kol Shārif Mosque, I asked the tour guide, in Tatar, about the bones that had been found underground. She replied that she would answer my question presently. It occurred to me at that moment that perhaps Xalit had been playing with the slipperiness of Kol Shārif’s location. It could be that both he and the archaeologist were right. The bones found on the site where the new Kol Shārif mosque was being built were “Russian,” while those found at the spot it was speculated the old one stood were “Tatar.” This thought was prompted by the guide’s pronouncement that Tatars had defended Kol Shārif to the last man, which meant that she accepted the likelihood that there were Tatar remains in the Kremlin.

When we emerged into the lane, the guide informed the children that the new Presidential Palace was at its far end and asked, switching to Tatar, whether we should walk down to see it. No one offered a response. After a few moments of silence, I exclaimed in Tatar, “Let’s go!” Everyone turned to look at me in astonishment.

By the time we had viewed the exterior of the Presidential Palace and made our way back uphill to the mosque’s construction site, the feel of the group had become much more relaxed. The children had stopped fussing and the teachers had stopped scolding. We moved together in a steady rhythm, no longer observing the polite distance of strangers. The sense that we had to put up a front for the Russians—having learned there were none among us—was gone. We were down home now and could have all comfortably changed into our bathrobes. I asked the guide about the bones a second time. She said, “There are Tatar bones all over the place. It’s true that excavations for the new mosque unearthed a graveyard attached to an 18th-century monastery, but there were Tatar bones there too, left unburied after Kazan fell to Russia.”

A few days later, one of my American professors, Uli Schamiloglu, a historian at the University of Wisconsin, was in town and I met up with him and his good friend local ethnologist Damir Isxakov at Café Giuseppe on Kremlin Street. Since Damir knows everything that happens in Kazan, I told him the stories of the bones and asked him why the bureaucrats had felt compelled to lie to me. He responded that they needed to include Russians physically in the heart of the Tatarstan nation and therefore had to give Russians claim to the bones found inside the Kremlin.

Post-Soviet Space

The remainder of this chapter concerns how Tatar-speakers have attempted to repossess Kazan by expanding the domains in which they speak the Tatar language. It continues to explore how ideologies are translated into practices, moving from large-scale representations of repossession to the minute, mundane interactions of everyday life. In order to explain these quotidian processes, this section engages with ideas of how people divide the world into private and public spheres. It suggests that conceiving of the movement of Tatar language into previously public, and consequently, Russian-speaking, domains as domestication may be heuristically productive.

The domestication described here is not a reflection of the feminized domestic that constitutes a subset of the private sphere.²⁵ Rather, it refers to the way in which people render familiar, comfortable, and their “own” space they habitually occupy, but do not inhabit.²⁶ Domesticated spaces exist in a liminal position perceived to exist between the private and public. *Limen* literally means threshold. Therefore, domestication may be understood as the creation of a porous threshold around an activity of uncertain permanence. It entails both nonce and more enduring embeddings of the personal and the informal in otherwise public space.²⁷

Building upon earlier analyses of postsocialist space, I would like to make three interrelated points about publicness and privateness in Tatarstan that have salience for other contexts.²⁸ First, it’s not only how people use language that indicates the ways they imagine private and public, but also the language they use. That is, in situations of asymmetrical diglossia, speaking the non-hegemonic language can and often does signal privateness. Second, while the generally recognized oppositional discursive embedding of public/private binaries holds true for Tatarstan, a sphere exists that is domesticated and therefore not public, but nonetheless not considered private. Third, the coexistence of these two circumstances encourages processes that alter the normative rules for conversational exchanges beyond the nonce re-calibrations of private/public. Indeed, over time they can change how public space is constituted.

Soviet people have had good reason to perceive private and public as immutably separate.²⁹ Most pervasively, this perception was fueled by the threat of arrest, which affected different people to varying degrees, but nevertheless touched every Soviet’s life.³⁰ Informing to the secret police was a widespread practice and tool for ideological control and most people have living memories of being informed upon, informing on others, or

both. Therefore, people have the habit of being careful about what they say in public, often confining the expression of their most intimate opinions to spaces imagined as private, quintessentially, the kitchens of their apartments.³¹ While the Soviet state made incursions into reconfiguring home life along socialist lines, particularly in the 1920s, mid-1930s, and late 1950s an ideological imagining first of the hearth and later the kitchen as the place of greatest domesticity and the most honest, chest-baring confessions and communions nevertheless persisted.³² As linguistic anthropologist Susan Gal notes, “the major characteristics of public talk were understood to be insincerity, mendacity, the need to dissimulate (if one was a performer) and to decode (as audience or addressee). . . . By contrast, talk in private was supposed to be intense, emotional, heartfelt, and trusting.”³³ This binary existed notwithstanding the fact that the majority of Soviets living in large cities, housed either in communal apartments (even after Khrushchev’s housing campaign) or in separate apartments where even whispered intimacies were broadcast to neighbors through thin walls and airshafts, could only experience a kind of “public privacy.”³⁴

The perception of a stark division between private and public means that to this day former Soviets discursively partition their world through a series of shifting, fractal recalibrations between what they designate as their “own” and “other.”³⁵ Linked to the linguistic calibration of places and people into one’s “own” and “other” is the care that former Soviets take of their “own,” often interior, space and the disdain with which the majority treat what they perceive to be exterior, public spaces—which are everyone’s and therefore end up belonging to no one.³⁶ Consequently, private garden plots were more productive than collective farms and people put enormous energy into caring for their government-bestowed apartments, while neglecting the exterior space within their buildings and the yards that surround them.³⁷ Anyone who has been a guest in a former Soviet’s home will have been struck by the stark contrast between the filthy landing outside the door to their host’s apartment and the lovingly maintained corridor just inside the threshold.

Stepping over a threshold is always a marked activity. Thresholds serve as both connections between outside and inside and the boundaries that separate them from each other.³⁸ They are often the locations of ritual transitions, including communions between the living and the dead.³⁹ In Russia thresholds are precarious places, across which it is considered bad luck to hold a conversation with someone who is not “other.” Shaking hands or embracing over a threshold is a misstep that requires immediate rectification.



Figure 5.7. Typical apartment building stairwell

While the danger of arrest has diminished in the past 20 years, though perhaps only temporarily, the markedness of the threshold may nonetheless be increasing. Ex-Soviets perceive the space beyond their thresholds as increasingly filled with disorder, crime, alcoholism, pornography, and drug addiction. In most of the former USSR, public space is generally less policed than it used to be. Many public places, habitually neglected by government authorities, fall into ever greater disrepair.

Anthropologist Dale Pesmen notes the marked separation of inside and outside created by Soviet thresholds and links this to an increased restriction in movement beginning in the 1930s that affected entrance into buildings, migration into cities, and movement across state borders.⁴⁰ People's demeanors are also remarkably different depending upon where they stand in relation to the threshold. Ex-Soviets can be openly hostile without apparent reason in public domains, such as shops or on public transportation, but hospitable to a fault in their own homes.

Guests passing over an ex-Soviet threshold into what Svetlana Boym calls "the community of one's own inner circle" enter the *prikhozhaya*.⁴¹ There they remove their shoes, don a pair of proffered slippers, and find a place to leave their outer garments. Women examine themselves in the mirror that always hangs next to the doorway, smooth their hair, apply lipstick, and straighten their clothing. Upon leaving the ritual is performed

in reverse. Among Slavs, but not Tatars, if you leave and realize you have forgotten something, you must look again in the mirror—as a preventative measure against bad luck—before stepping a second time over the threshold out into the world.

Domesticating the Workplace

In the former USSR, people habitually domesticate their workplaces. Though modernist efficiency was a priority, at least at the ideological level, in Soviet plans to create built space, human comfort never was.⁴² Therefore, workplace domestication is more necessary there than in countries where individual consumerism has historically fueled the economy. The Soviet government's abhorrence of cafés as places where people would squander time better spent in socialist labor encouraged workplace domestication, since there was often no comfortable place to eat away from home.⁴³ Moreover, the requisite individual thrift imposed by the command economy and the impoverishment most ex-Soviets have experienced since its collapse causes domestic expansion into habitually occupied space to be greater than it might be elsewhere.

Spaces created for tea drinking—which always includes some eating—offer the clearest example of workplace domestication. Unlike Americans, people in the former Soviet Union don't sip beverages or nibble food alone at their desks while they work. Instead, they take tea-drinking breaks during which the working collective—that is, the group of people who work together in a single room—sits down together around a table to drink, eat, and chat.

Domesticated space is always fragile. Rules of hospitality dictate that to eat or drink in front of people who are not eating and drinking is unacceptably rude. Therefore, it is always somewhat awkward for all involved when someone not invited to the table stumbles upon people drinking tea. Such stumbling constitutes an infringement of the public and undomesticated upon domesticated space. The intruder either must be excluded, and told to come back after the shop clerks or librarians or postal workers have finished having their tea, or offered a seat at the table.

Schoolteachers domesticate their classrooms by taking responsibility for their upkeep. They supply the window curtains, usually financed by their pupils' parents, and other decorations; create their own visual teaching aids by hand; and paint the walls themselves. Their pupils are responsible for cleaning the floors and the chalkboards under teacher supervision.

Beyond this, teachers occasionally create domesticated nooks within their classrooms. At the Lab School in the 1990s the Tatar teachers had a domesticated space behind the bookcases at the rear of a classroom. Several desks lined the walls. A freestanding wardrobe, crowded with coat hangers, and a bookcase served as an impermanent wall. A mirror hung next to the opening into the rest of the room. Books stood in bookcases and piled up on desks, as did stacks of student papers, while tea-drinking things—an electric kettle, tea cups, spoons, and small plates—each had their own place in a set of shelves. The sponge rubbed over a crude bar of scentless, grey-brown *domashnoe* (domestic) soap for washing the cups, spoons, and plates had previously served as a teacher's pantyhose. (There were no sponges or dish soap in the USSR.) Along with tea, teachers and their guests would consume homemade preserves, boiled out of fruit the teachers and their extended families had gathered wild or grown on dacha plots or in their natal villages. Thus, different from the fleeting connections people in consumer-based economic systems may have with the industrially produced objects occupying their domesticated work spaces—disposable coffee cups and printouts of digital photographs—most of the objects these women used emerged out of a history of interactions with them. And yet, they did not consider this space to be private. They always took care to watch what they said in it, which differed from the less formal, more relaxed demeanors they eased into upon entering their apartments or automobiles.

Floating Domestication

As Tatars shed the practice of trying to pass for Russian, they have come to mark themselves more frequently with emblems of ethnic identity. These emblems are primarily religious, since religious identity has become part of public self-presentation. Their introduction constitutes a kind of floating domestication of public space. Similar to other contexts where sensitivity to group identity is heightened, the religious cues people in Kazan employ simultaneously signify bundled national and political affiliations.⁴⁴ While not every affiliation has an emblematic semiotic representation, certain find expression in external, removable markings that correspond loosely to three different metropole orientations—Kazan, Moscow, and Mecca. Many Russians regard Moscow as the center of the polity they inhabit, whereas Tatars of rural origin often view Kazan as their metropole and some see Moscow as inimical to their polity. Mean-

while, religious Tatars feel oriented towards Mecca and the Arab world.⁴⁵ The practice of displaying religious emblems is gendered, with women seeming more inclined to do so than men. Though since women rarely drive automobiles, perhaps they simply more visibly display symbols of floating domestication as they circulate through Kazan's urban landscape on foot and public transportation.

Women mark their nationality year round. In summer their clothing allows them to display Christian crosses—equated with Russianness—or the crescent-moon pendants and small leather pouches containing prayers in Arabic—which mark Tatariness. In summer and winter alike, women in Kazan wear headscarves and shawls, which convey affiliatory inclinations. Scarves with certain patterns symbolize Russianness. These include any all-black scarves or black scarves with somberly colored designs and rich red, saffron yellow, and deep green flower motifs. Russians may well not wear such scarves, but a woman who does is almost always Russian. These scarves cannot be worn inside a mosque. Younger women who wear scarves don't cover their heads with them, unless they are in church, but instead drape them over their shoulders.⁴⁶



Figure 5.8. Old Tatar women favor white headscarves

Old Tatar women of rural origin are most likely to mark their ethnicity in everyday life, but without necessarily stressing the religiously Muslim aspects of their identity. That is, while they cover their heads in most weather, they don't do so primarily to show their observance of shariat. In warmer weather, old women wear lightweight white or grey wool scarves or, in summer, flowing pure white cotton. These they tie at the nape of the

neck—without first folding them into a triangle as is the habit among Russian and Ukrainian women—so that the front edge of the scarf spans their ears and the back part of the scarf hangs freely over their shoulders. In winter, they wear thick scarves knitted from natural, undyed sheep's or goat's wool, which cover their foreheads and necks. Younger Tatar women also wear the thick wool scarves in winter, though they tie them over their shoulders and around their waists under their heavy winter coats or drape them around their necks. Even though these scarves are the warmest thing a person can wear during Kazan's frigid winter, Russian women don't seem to like them, probably because of their association with rural life.

Religious Muslim women, including *mādrāse* students, wear their headscarves pulled down over their foreheads and covering their necks, like devout Muslims in other countries. Unlike most older women, they cover their heads mainly to mark their adherence to Islamic law. They are Muslim first and Tatar second, but they are nearly all Tatar.⁴⁷ While sovereignty was still vibrant, women who covered up in this fashion were generally young, usually under thirty and stood out among their peers for wearing no makeup.⁴⁸ More recently, however, more and more women who achieved adulthood during the Soviet period are adopting the *hijab*. Such women express great interest in Arab countries, tending to idealize their social relations and cultures, and long to visit them for study or the *hadj*. Women who veil are introducing religion, an aspect of life that was once private to the point of secrecy, into the public sphere.⁴⁹ At the same time, the veil keeps their bodies private while they move through public space.⁵⁰

Besides domesticating habitually occupied space with tea-drinking places, people in Tatarstan domesticate the vehicles they drive with decorations, regardless of whether they are privately or publicly owned. Bus-drivers often scotch-tape magazine pictures, usually of scantily clad women, and other images around their seats, thereby marking the area as domesticated. The Muslim prayer beads called *tisbā*, green plastic disks imprinted with prayers in Arabic, and much less frequently Christian crosses or Orthodox icons hang from the rearview mirrors of private vehicles, police cars, taxis, ambulances, and buses.

Decorating vehicles carves up Kazan along national lines. While the articulated purpose of these religious symbols is to protect the driver and passengers from accidents—a real and constant danger on Russian roads—they also serve as territorial markers. When I asked Tatar ethnologist Damir Isxakov about this practice, he told me that Tatars started to

mark their vehicles in the 1980s in reaction to Russians, who had begun to hang crosses on their rearview mirrors. Since the late 1990s, however, the majority of visible cues in Kazan vehicles identified their drivers as Muslim and hence Tatar.



Figure 5.9. Car with Tisbä

Men on foot also sometimes mark their nationality using religious symbols. Russian men are often completely unmarked, unless it is by crosses worn around their necks, usually concealed beneath their shirts. Non-Russian men may identify themselves by wearing their national hats, which are variously ascribed for Tatars, Uzbeks, and other Muslim nationalities. These forms of headgear—called *töbäte* in Tatar—are predominantly worn by old men, but younger practicing Muslims also wear them or the white skullcaps worn by devout Muslims elsewhere.

Despite the existence of this complex semiotics for marking national, religious, and potentially political affiliation, most Kazanians do *not* mark their affiliation in their daily dress. In the winter, which lasts at least six months of the year, every woman who can afford to wears a fur coat and hat and tall insulated leather boots. And every man with the means wears a fur hat and a lined shearling coat. Consequently, language proves to be the most consistently salient marker of domestication.

Domestic Languages

As a result of Soviet nationalities policies, by the 1980s Tatar bore the signs of a dying language, considered a kitchen language—as opposed to a fully developed literary one—or something to be spoken only within rurally marked domains.⁵¹ By contrast, Russian was generally accepted as

the language of both universal and civilized communication. However, in Kazan though Tatar language was imagined to symbolize Tatar “domestic” life, even there it was not necessarily dominant.

Although most Tatars say they speak Tatar at home, they often use Russian without noticing.⁵² This depends upon a number of factors, including whether they are fully competent speakers of Tatar, whether there are Russians present, or whether they are watching Russian-language television. At social events involving alcohol consumption in their homes, Tatar-speakers tend to say more toasts in Tatar than when they are drinking in more public domains, for instance, at teachers’ gatherings in school buildings. However, the practice of drinking heavily—doing endless shots with obligatory toasts shored up by fatty food—is culturally “Russian.” Frequently, the standard speeches Tatars make are calqued from Russian. Therefore, even Tatar-speakers uncomfortable speaking Russian have a tendency to switch into that language when saying toasts. Often toasts begun in Tatar end in Russian.⁵³ Gatherings where everyone is proficient in Tatar are rare. Urban Tatars under fifty years of age usually speak more Russian than Tatar and, as I noted in the previous chapter, Kazan social networks tend to be ethnically mixed. Thus, when ethnic Russians or Tatar friends or family with poor knowledge of Tatar are invited to the homes of dominant Tatar-speakers, hospitality norms dictate that some or all interactions should take place in Russian.

Tatar-Inflected Domains

Even though Tatar homes in Kazan may not be completely Tatar-speaking, certain Tatar-dominant spaces exist beyond the domestic threshold. Some of these are conceived as rural enclaves, like the bazaar or the Agricultural and Veterinary Universities. Others have political or religious significance. Yet others possess a politically Tatar valence, including the TOTs building and the Tatar World Congress, both adjacent to Freedom Square. In the TOTs building, speaking Russian is inappropriate—university-aged Tatars have been documented suffering performance anxiety there due to their inability to speak “pure” Tatar.⁵⁴ TOTs has become inactive since 2000 and as a result, the Tatar World Congress, which focuses on promoting Tatar culture, especially in the diaspora, has become the sole Tatar-dominant political organization.

In mosques the language to speak, except when praying in Arabic, is Tatar. However, the international Muslim community—*umma*—is sup-

posed to supersede national boundaries. Thus, even though Islam is considered iconic of Tatarness, and despite outrage from some Tatar-speakers, in an effort to reach out to russophone Tatars and gain new Russian-speaking converts the religious hierarchy has accepted the use of Russian for teaching about Islam. In spite of this decision, the language I heard spoken whenever I visited a mosque was Tatar. And when I attended Friday prayers at Kol Shārif Mosque in 2006, knowledge of Tatar was presumed. Indeed, the post-Soviet proliferation of mosques in Tatarstan has increased the use of Tatar outside the home. In particular, the colossal Kol Shārif packed with believers during religious services acts as a Tatar-speaking center and elevates the language from the quotidian bazaar to the celestial purity experienced in the women's balcony and (most likely) among the men who pray together on vast carpet covering the ground floor.

From Public to Domesticated

In the spring of 2000 my research assistant Gulnaz arranged for me to meet the infamous Tatar nationalist Fäüzia Bāyrāmova. In order to see her, we had to travel from Kazan to Yar Chally, Tatarstan's second largest city and the home of Kamaz Trucks, where Bāyrāmova lived, some 130 miles to the east. Meeting early in the morning, Gulnaz and I flagged down an unofficial taxi. Gulnaz asked the driver, an old man, in Russian whether he would be willing to take us to a roundabout on the edge of town from which minibuses travel east to other Tatarstan cities. He acquiesced and we took our seats in the back of his car. After the man had driven for several minutes in silence, Gulnaz suddenly asked the man, in Tatar, if he were Tatar. When he responded in Tatar that he was indeed Tatar, a conversation ensued. Calling him by the Tatar kin term for older brother or uncle (*abiy*), Gulnaz explained to him where we were going and why, speaking much more openly than she does when talking to Russians. In this case Gulnaz recalibrated the automobile's domain. She considered the car public when we entered it and therefore used Russian in a formal interaction that concerned business. The car thereafter became domesticated, as Gulnaz and the driver conversed in Tatar. This example likewise demonstrates how Tatar is perceived as a language of intimate interchange, for Gulnaz was willing to talk about things in Tatar with the driver that she will not discuss in Russian with Russian-speakers.

Similarly, when Tatar teachers working in Russian schools come to work, they pass through the Russian-dominant domains of public trans-

portation and the school as a whole into the room they share as an office. As they hang up their coats and hats on the pegs by the door, they shift from speaking mostly Russian to speaking almost entirely in Tatar. By the time they have fixed their hair and gathered their books to head off to class, the code shift is complete. On a nippy day in late October 1999, one of the Tatar teachers at the English School entered the Tatar teachers' office from outdoors. She greeted those of us already in the room in Tatar, "İsänmesez!" but then switched to Russian to ask, "Aren't you cold?" The head teacher responded in Tatar, "We have all been indoors for sometime now." All the conversation in the room thereafter, until I left a couple of hours later, took place in Tatar with the only Russian words spoken the titles of specific government institutions. The head teacher later informed me that she didn't consider the teacher who spoke in Russian qualified to do her job: she had received her position as a result of political connections. In this case the teacher not only physically moved from a public to a domesticated domain, but her speech patterns also underwent domestication with subtle pressure from the head teacher.

Ideally, Harmony

One Wednesday afternoon in November 1999 I was drinking tea with Hayat *apa*, who, without speaking knowledge of Russian, migrated to Kazan at the age of 17 to apply to university. Hayat *apa* asked me what a scholarly friend of hers, with whom I had met a few days earlier, was working on these days, and then provided the answer herself, "Bilingualism among the Working Class." Hayat *apa* took a sip of her tea and declared, "I don't consider that bilingualism." She explained her meaning, "When there is pressure [*nagruzka*] to speak in broken language [*na lo-manom yazyke*], that's not bilingualism. It used to be that shop girls from the village, no matter how badly they spoke Russian, wouldn't respond in Tatar to requests made in that language. To speak Tatar was considered uncultured [*nekul'turno*] and ill mannered [*nevospitano*]." Hayat *apa* continued, "For there to be bilingualism, there must be harmony. There has to be a kind of purity of mind, a harmony of feeling that allows a person to pursue the study of two languages without feeling resentment."

Knowing that Hayat *apa* is deliberate in everything she says, I realized that she made this statement, with its ideology of linguistic purism to clarify for me—the foreign ethnographer—the changing status of Tatar language.⁵⁵ Though Hayat *apa* appears to disdain working class people, since

they don't have the leisure to study Russian without the practical need that can cause resentment, this isn't the case. Rather, Hayat *apa* is reacting to a situation in which, as she perceives it, working-class people demeaned themselves, denying their national language and self-worth by insisting on speaking Russian, a language in which they could barely communicate, to other Tatar-speakers. Hayat *apa*'s view represents an idealized political economy of bilingualism in which the standing of each language both reflects and reproduces social equality among its native speakers. In contrast to this ideal, subsequent to World War II, Tatar-speakers were often ashamed of their knowledge. Even in 2006, some 20 years after glasnost was instituted, Tatar and Russian languages did not enjoy equal status.

Before the Soviet Union's collapse, people not otherwise employed as agricultural workers were regularly requisitioned to help bring in the annual harvest, with brigades of "volunteers" organized around workplaces and educational institutions. For example, schoolchildren in northern Russia brought in the potatoes, while those living in Kyrgyzstan picked cotton. Different people have different opinions about this practice—some volunteers I knew in St. Petersburg found it to be great fun and recall nighttime bonfires, fresh air, and opportunities for romance, while others complained that it interrupted children's education. But everyone has stories about agricultural volunteerism. Reixana *xanym*, a city-born schoolteacher with a cranky sense of humor, told me this story.

During an October harvest, Reixana *xanym* stayed in a Tatar peasant woman's house with a bunch of women of village origin who were trying to seem urbane by affecting not to know Tatar. One night the faux urbanites were chatting among themselves as they lay in bed. The peasant woman said to them in Tatar, "Why are you still gabbing? It's time to sleep." The faux urbanites pretended not to understand and asked Reixana *xanym* what the peasant woman had said. A bit of a troublemaker, Reixana *xanym* interpreted the peasant's words into Russian, "She said, 'Why are you talking so quietly? I want to hear what you're saying.'" The faux urbanites began to speak louder and the peasant woman asked, "Why are you making so much noise?" Again, the women asked Reixana *xanym* what the hostess said. She told them, "That's enough talking. She wants you to sing a song." The women started to sing in Russian. The peasant woman lost patience at this point and yelled, "That's enough. I'm going to kick all of you out of the house," at which moment the faux urbanites immediately fell silent.⁵⁶

This story may contain more drama than verisimilitude. Indeed, information provided by Reixana *xanym*, a busybody old maid who thrives on

gossip, is often unreliable. Nevertheless, the story is important because Reixana *xanym* shared it with me as an illustration of how Tatars used to be made ashamed of being Tatar, which was most significantly indicated by not speaking unaccented, standard Russian. Thus, not being able to speak Russian fluently, or speaking it with Tatar-inflected phonology, or speaking Tatar in addition to Russian were all bits of linguistic knowledge that marked Tatars as subordinate to Russians. Many Tatars made great efforts to throw off these markings, which is why, as historian Nail Garipov pointed out to me during our interview, the majority of urban Tatar intellectuals are russophone.

Pragmatic Tatar

On more than one occasion when Tatar-speakers introduced me to new people, the new acquaintances praised my knowledge of Tatar and half-joked, “We won’t be able to keep any secrets from her.” This suggests that Tatar’s role as a language used to create intimacy and solidarity entails a function as a code for keeping secrets from outsiders. Not surprisingly, exchanges of secrets can be somewhat malicious, as when I observed two old maid schoolteachers, who usually conversed in Russian, switch into Tatar to gossip about a man dressed in an Orthodox priest’s habit standing directly in front of them. Or they can be used as a kind of private aside, as when a Tatar university administrator who otherwise insisted on speaking Russian with me, switched into Tatar to tell me not to lose heart when my fiancé was hospitalized with a life-threatening illness. Most frequently, though, using Tatar seems to grant a person certain license to ask favors and extend village interactional mores into urban terrain.

I observed an example of this pragmatic use of Tatar early in my fieldwork, in 1998, on a trolley bus. An elderly woman boarded the bus to find that there were no vacant seats. She was rather corpulent and needed both hands to hold onto the bar above her head so as not to be tossed about as the bus dipped in and out of gaping potholes. The elderly woman held a plastic pail in one hand and had difficulty grasping its handle and the bar at the same time. She looked around and noticed that two seated women were quietly conversing in Tatar and appealed to them in that language to take her pail onto their laps. At first, they looked affronted and were only willing to cram the pail into the space between their seats and the bus’s grimy wall. But, the elderly woman insisted that the pail was clean and the

two seated women eventually agreed to hold the pail on their laps at the risk of soiling their clothes, thereby granting the woman making the request the consideration due one's "own." The elderly woman succeeded in extending village mores into her urban environment by using the language of domestic life in a non-domestic domain.

Domesticating Public Space

From the perspective of Tatar-speakers, Kazan's public space during the Soviet period was inimical. Indeed, urban space, in contradistinction to Tatar villages, continues to be ideologized as Russian-speaking and, hence, the domain of Russians. As a school administrator explained to me in 1999, "Tatar grandmothers should be able to make all their daily household purchases using their native language without fear of discrimination." Tatar-speakers don't want to eject Russians from urban public domains, but rather to change the rules for public interactions.

Moments of conflict reveal social contestation, either because of ongoing disagreements about what behavioral norms should be or because those norms are changing. The following examples of verbal conflicts demonstrate how linguistic domestication changed the interactional norms in Tatarstan public space during sovereignty. Each example concerns an effort to curtail the use of Russian in public and a corollary demand that Tatar receive recognition as a government language.

The first example is an interchange that occurred in 1998 in a food store with the Tatar name *Bäxät* [Happiness]. A man approached the deli counter and greeted the rosy-cheeked shop clerk standing behind it with the standard Russian "**Zdravstvujte** [**Hello**]."* In response, with a broad smile on her face, the clerk proclaimed loudly enough for everyone in the shop to hear, "*Isänmesez! Zdravstvujte ne ponimaem* [*Hello! (Tatar). We do not understand the word "zdravstvujte" (Russian).*]" The shop clerk thus asserted her right to be addressed in her native language—a change from the circumstances Hayat *apa* described. The clerk simultaneously domesticated a public sphere with Tatar, albeit using Russian meta-discursively to make clear to all present exactly what was occurring.⁵⁷

In 1991 President Shaimiev created a Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, as part of an investment in developing and maintaining research and edu-

* Italics indicate *Tatar* and bold denotes **Russian**.

cational institutions with a focus on Tatar language, culture, and history.⁵⁸ At first, the primary language of communication in those institutions was Russian. For example, at the History Institute, in the late 1990s the official business of meetings usually took place in Russian, while utterances in a low register of formality, such as telling latecomers, "Take a seat," occurred in Tatar. People who followed these patterns of code-switching explained to me that they found speaking Tatar at work difficult, even when all present were Tatar-speakers, both because they had received their intellectual training in Russian and because they were so well-trained not to use Tatar away from home. However, by 2006 with the introduction of a new generation of colleagues, Tatar had become the dominant language at the History Institute. The Institute had become linguistically domesticated, perhaps through exchanges like the one below.

In 2000, I was waiting in the reception office of a Tatar-dominant, government-funded language research institute. The institute was Tatar-dominant in two ways, first, by housing researchers who work only on topics pertaining to Tatar language and culture and, second, in contradistinction to similar institutes, both Tatar and Russian were used in official meetings, such as dissertation defenses. However, like all workplaces in Kazan, even though the institute was Tatar-dominant, not all its employees were fluent in Tatar (which I discovered when I asked the librarian the location of the toilet and was greeted with a blank stare). As I sat waiting to see the institute's director, a crew from the Tatarstan Republic Television Station entered the room. A member of the crew, a man in his twenties, greeted everyone sitting in the reception area with the Russian "*Dobryi den*" [Good day]. Before anyone else responded, a man a generation older than the crewmember looked up from his desk and scowled in Tatar, "*Tatarcha söiläshä!*" [Speak Tatar! (familiar)]. The young man said nothing in response. Age and linguistic knowledge imputed his elder with cultural authority that demanded respect.

The third example demonstrates that the authority that older Tatars wield over younger ones doesn't depend upon working at a prestigious occupation. As do many people with low-status jobs, the women who operate the food concession stands located in the lobby of the main building of Kazan University speak Tatar publicly. In June 1998, I was purchasing food from one such stand when the vendor instructed a student who ordered his lunch in Russian to speak Tatar, using me as an example to shame him:

v.	What do you need?	Chto vam?
me	<i>Water, please.</i>	<i>Su, pozhalujstva.</i>
She tries to give me juice, which is called sok .		
me	<i>Water, water.</i>	<i>Su, su.</i>
v.	<i>Cold?</i>	<i>Salkynmy?</i>
me	<i>Yes.</i>	<i>Äie.</i>
v.	<i>Where are you from?</i>	<i>Sez kaidan?</i>
me	<i>America.</i>	<i>Min Amerikadan kildem.</i>
v.	<i>You speak Tatar?</i>	<i>Tatarcha söiläshäsezme?</i>
me	<i>I can speak a little Tatar.</i>	<i>Beraz tatarcha söiläalam.</i>
v.	<i>There's another person from America. S/he knows Tatar too.</i>	<i>Bashka ber Amerikadan kilgän keshe bar. Ul da tatarcha belä. Any beläsezme?</i>
me	<i>No, is s/he here?</i>	<i>Iuk. Mondamy?</i>
v.	<i>Yes, here.</i>	<i>Monda.</i>

A male student [st.] approaches and orders in **Russian**.

v.	<i>Speak Tatar.</i>	<i>Tatarcha söiläshä.</i>
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The boy answers in **Russian**. The vendor continues, in Tatar:

v.	<i>This person came from America.</i>	<i>Bu keshe Amerikadan kilde.</i>
	<i>She knows Tatar.</i>	<i>Tatarcha belä.</i>
st.	I understand, but I can't speak.	Ia ponimaiu, no govorit' ne mogu.

The vendor turns to me:

v.	They don't know how to talk here.	Zdes' ne umeiut razgovorivat'.
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While the vendor's insistence that the student speak Tatar was clearly provoked by my efforts to converse in that language, the exchange in the research institute, where no one knew me, indicates that hearing "*Tatarcha söiläshä*" can happen even in the absence of fieldworker effect.⁵⁹ Such incidents—frequent during sovereignty—served as embarrassing reminders to young Tatars that they were unequipped to meet their elders' demands. They represented a significant shift in the expectations for conversational interactions from those current during late socialism, as illustrated by Amina *xanym*, who once confided to me over a bottle of home-made spirits, "Before, my son used to say to me, 'Mama, why are you speaking that barbaric tongue? Stop cursing right now!' Now, he asks me why I didn't teach him Tatar."

The fourth example represents the kinds of attitudes that must have persuaded Amina *xanym*'s son to devalue his mother's native language. In 1999 the Kazan city government estimated that at least 10% of public transport riders were traveling *zaitsem* (bunny-style), that is, without paying their fares. In 2001, conductors were installed on all public transporta-

tion, but for a several years the city waged an aggressive campaign to catch transgressors. Teams of ticket inspectors would swarm trams and buses at central stations and escort people without valid tickets to mobile holding pens, where they would be detained until they paid a fine. In December 1999 a middle-aged, female ticket inspector accosted me as I stepped off a train at Kazan's central stop. I had been conversing in Tatar with a couple of old women during the ride, so when the inspector asked for my ticket, I responded with the Tatar word "*Xäzer*," as I searched my pockets. Exhibiting a Soviet-period attitude, the inspector sneered in disgust and jeered at me in Russian, "**Что ето значит, *xäzer*?** [What does that mean '*xäzer*'?]" I retorted, "**Ето значит 'сеичас' по-татарски, в одном из вашей государственной языков** [It means 'just a moment' in Tatar, in one of your government languages]" and held out my ticket. The inspector became frightened and returned my ticket to me without bothering to examine it.

Linguistic domestication changed the expectations for public interactions among some native speakers of Russian. For example, a russophone Tatar Interpol officer I knew planned to leave Tatarstan because his ignorance of Tatar had a deleterious effect on his career. Likewise, a Russian-speaking Tatar businessman running for political office in 2000 explained, when asked during a meeting with voters, that while he was only learning to speak Tatar, his children studied it hard at school and spoke well.

Similarly, Alina, an ethnic Russian, after working as a clothes merchant at an outdoor bazaar for four years, began to try to acquire enough ability in spoken Tatar to engage potential customers in their native language. She hoped to increase her sales for, she told me, "There are some very rich Tatar women coming in from the countryside to buy things and they don't want to spend their money where the merchants don't speak Tatar." Alina's words reveal how conventions for face-to-face interactions in what Kazanians consider public domains have shifted as a consequence of the movement of Tatar outside domestic space, facilitated in this case by the post-Soviet expansion of market relations which allows consumers the choice to make decisions about purchases based upon nationalist feelings.⁶⁰ Once Tatarstan became officially bilingual in 1990, knowledge of Tatar became a requirement for advancing in government hierarchies. As long as sovereignty held sway, russophone Tatars and other Russian-speakers tried to find ways to integrate themselves into bilingual society.

A final illustration of how linguistic domestication has affected language-choice norms comes from a Russian woman, Lena, a convert to Islam who had adopted Muslim modest dress. Indicating the extent to

which the hijab symbolizes not only Tatar nationality, but also knowledge of the Tatar language, Lena reported that she was frequently embarrassed because Tatar women would address her in Tatar and she couldn't respond. Lena complained of the discrimination she encountered because of her faith in the school where she worked as a teacher, but remained devoted to her newfound religion. After converting, she expelled the family dog from her apartment because of the Islamic belief that their barking scares away angels. The dog lived on the landing outside their door off scraps it begged from the neighbors. Lena had also coerced her husband to convert—threatening to leave him if he didn't—and converted her parents, who were likely the only Muslims in the southern Russian town where they lived. After meeting me, Lena was inspired to begin studying Tatar, having decided to bring the language into her home.

Conclusions

Although during sovereignty Tatar-speakers began to repossess Kazan, the authority behind that repossession was tenuous and, furthermore, diffused by divergent opinions concerning what it should consist in. Exploring what occurred when Tatars introduced a big symbol of Islam into the heart of Tatarstan's government exemplifies some of the tensions inherent in having to find positive ways to physically include Russians in Kazan's past and present. The controversies surrounding the "recreation" of Kol Shārif Mosque mirror the tenuousness of Tatarstan sovereignty and its ultimate lack of political authority. Tatar-speakers continue to have to accommodate dominant "Russian" desires in constructing Tatar national institutions and to adhere to "Russian" historical fictions when they publicly recount the relations between the two communities.

Recognizing the existence of a domestic sphere, ideologized as intermediary between private and public, explains how Tatar is becoming a public language in the post-Soviet period. Until perestroika, speaking Tatar was predominantly confined to the most domestic space, that is, one's "own" kitchen or to domains marked as rural—one's "own" village, the bazaar and Kazan's Agricultural Institute. Therefore, the choice to speak Tatar in domains that are considered public and urban can be understood as an expansion of domestic space into the public sphere. Tatars have attempted to linguistically domesticate, and thereby repossess, Kazan in the post-Soviet period by redefining the norms for public interactions.

Efforts to linguistically domesticate Tatarstan's Russian-speakers haven't endured because of pressure from Moscow to dismantle sovereignty. However, linguistic domestication has significantly affected how Tatar-speakers behave in public space. In 2006, they spoke freely among themselves in public domains, no longer looking around to see if there were any Russians within earshot they might offend with their "barbaric" language. At the same time, Russian-speakers no longer exhibited any signs of feeling compelled to learn Tatar as a way to demonstrate their respect for Tatar culture and people. Moving Tatar out of the metaphorical kitchens and villages into Kazan's streets didn't create feelings of harmony, as Hayat *apa* so earnestly hoped. Instead, people's worldviews have continued to diverge along linguistic lines and Tatar-speakers have become increasingly cocooned in their own discursive worlds where their efforts to live according to an ethos of negotiated peace have little effect on broader society.

The next chapter explores how people in Kazan interpret who strangers are. Arguing that language is perceived as an indicator of a person's race, it demonstrates that, while the basis for political change in Tatarstan emerged from an acceptance of reified national cultures, as defined by Soviet colonial institutions, the categories people use to evaluate unknown people have shifted since the Soviet Union's collapse.

Notes

1 The language courses are part of a larger program to improve government bureaucrats' qualifications. In addition to the Tatar language, they studied management theories and other subjects.

2 The Tatar class was one of those the Tatarstan government sponsored.

3 See www.pyramida.ru for more details.

4 Fitzpatrick (1999).

5 I tried to revisit the exhibition again in 1998 and encountered a gathering of business entrepreneurs in the cafeteria. The rest of the building was closed. On a third occasion I entered the National Cultural Center, in 1999, to observe a history conference attended by President Shaimiev and former Russian Prime Minister Yevgenii Primakov not open to the general public. The fourth time I was in the National Cultural Center, in December 2000, I went there to dance at a Tatar discotheque held in its capacious front hall. And my final visit, in June 2006, was to participate in the Tatar Youth Forum, an international event organized by the Tatar World Congress, likewise not open to the general public. On none of these occasions was the exhibition hall open, though, based upon their interests, people at the latter three events would likely have embraced the opportunity to view the artifacts on the second floor of the building.

- 6 Moving people from their centrally located houses into outlying apartments isn't necessarily a seamless process. For instance, in 1998 my landlady took me to a house on the edge of the Old Tatar Quarter in which she and her family had lived in 1939. She spoke to a woman sitting on a wooden chair in front of the house, stringing beads, and discovered that the building officially no longer existed. (The words of the woman stringing beads were, "*Ne chislaetsia*.") According to government records, it had already been destroyed. Similar to what anthropologist Bruce Grant (1995) discovered on Sakhalin Island, there are people in Kazan whose residences fell through the bureaucratic cracks. Beyond this, being registered at one residence, while actually residing at another, was a common strategy for obviating Soviet anti-inheritance laws. Usually both residences existed on the books, which meant that they at least had electricity and received mail delivery. For example, in 1993 a friend in St. Petersburg had herself registered at her grandmother's room in a communal apartment, while she continued to live with her parents. When the old woman passed away, she would receive the room.
- 7 Sayid Kol Shārif was the spiritual leader who led the last defenders of Kazan against the invading troops of Ivan the Terrible in 1552 (Xalit 1997). In Russian "Kol" is transcribed "Kul." I have chosen to use the Tatar spelling, except when citing other people's work.
- 8 I know this firsthand from the shocked disapproval with which Tatars reacted when I admitted being an atheist.
- 9 The filth of the bazaar pertains to actual filth, the bad associations former Soviets still hold concerning making money through resale (*spekulatsiia*), and the foul language bazaar workers are supposed to use.
- 10 The money to build the mosques is rumored to have come from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, via Turkey.
- 11 Kucukcan (2005); Mite (2006).
- 12 Although the majority of ethnic Tatars are nominal Muslims and a growing number have been becoming increasingly religious since the collapse of the Soviet Union, nearly 1% of Tatars identify as Christians, according to the 2002 All-Russia Census.
- 13 Prior to 1917 Kazan had a sizeable Catholic community, but it doesn't figure in Safin's reckoning, perhaps because few Catholics are left. Note that the religions he lists are different from the four religions legal in Russia—Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. See Xalit (1997) for an account of the events that led up to the mosque's construction.
- 14 A Tatar version appeared sometime after May 2001. However, the unmarked URL, that is, the one without any additional notation after the word "kulsharif" indexed the Russian pages, which indicates that Russian is the basic, normative version.
- 15 Kol Shārif webpage: <http://www.rin.ru/kulsharif>. Last accessed 30 April 2003; no longer live as of December 6, 2006. (All translations mine.)
- 16 The paragraph in which this statement appeared reads as follows. "We are grateful to everybody who supports this sacred common cause. Their names will stay in hearts of contemporaries and thankful progeny, will enter the Memory Book and be perpetuated in the Memorial Plaque. Only with your help the Kul Sharif mosque will again become the Moslem centre of education, the symbol of Islam in Russia," Investors page, English.

- 17 "Many organizations, businesses and banks in the Republic have made donations to the Kul Sharif Mosque Foundation. Agricultural workers have made the weightiest contributions. Donations are being made by people of various ages, professions, and nationalities. The cultural intelligentsia has taken an active part in benefit events, held under the aegis of the Foundation. No city or region of the republic has remained on the sidelines. The re-creation of the mosque has in truth become an affair of all the peoples."
- 18 See Schamiloglu (2000), *inter alia*. Indeed, Tatars only started to accept that appellation in the 19th century, whereas it is debatable whether Tatars even today constitute what has traditionally been considered a nation in western scholarship. See Zakiev (1991) for evidence of the former and Gellner (1983) for an example of the latter.
- 19 Tatarstan Constitution (1997: 5).
- 20 All-Russia Census (2002).
- 21 Kol Shārif webpage: <http://www.rin.ru/kulsharif/>.
- 22 I don't know the details of the debate that prefaced the acceptance of this condition, being informed of its existence only while visiting Kazan in 1998.
- 23 See Verdery (1999) for similar controversies over questions of bones and post-socialist nations and Abu Al-haj (1995) and Shnirel'man (1996) for examples of how contestations over the interpretations of archaeological excavations can be employed in the establishment national histories on particular territories.
- 24 I looked for the Gorky Park monument during my 2006 visit to Kazan, but it had disappeared. In its place a highway had been constructed.
- 25 Neary (2006).
- 26 This is similar to Yurchak's (1997) point concerning how Soviets created parallel realities during public events. See also Humphrey (2002).
- 27 Gal (2002b). The notion of nonce and enduring embeddings of the personal and informal borrows from Gumperz's (1982) discussion of conversational code-switching.
- 28 These analyses of postsocialist space include Buchli (2000); Gal (2002a, 2002b); Kiar and Naiman (2006); Rittersporn, Rolf, and Behrends (2003); and Siegelbaum (2006).
- 29 While Habermas' (1989) theory of a unified public sphere has been called into question (Calhoun 1997[92]), most of us continue to ideologize publicness and privateness as separate realms in our daily lives (Gal 2002a, 2002b). See Yurchak (2006) for a comparable criticism of the notion of the dissimilating individual in Soviet society.
- 30 See Fitzpatrick (1994, 1999, 2006).
- 31 Gerasimova (2003).
- 32 These analyses include Buchli (2000); Fitzpatrick (1999); Neary (2006); Reid (2006). Former Czech dissident Vaclav Havel (1986) claimed that living in truth only occurred in what he called the hidden sphere; see also Mandelstam (1970). Ries (1997) provides examples of how Russian "private talk" was performed during the perestroika period.
- 33 Gal (2002a: 9).
- 34 Gerasimova (2003); Harris (2006).
- 35 Gal (2002a, 2002b). The words denoting "one's own" are *svoi* and *üz*, while "other" is a translation of *chuzhoi* and *yat*, in Russian and Tatar, respectively.
- 36 Boym (1994).
- 37 Gal (2002a); Verdery (1996). See also Sheila Fitzpatrick's (2003) review of several recent volumes on Soviet everyday life for the *London Review of Books*. Before the Soviet Union's collapse, maintenance of these exterior spaces was imposed through

- officially organized “volunteer” efforts, known as *subotniki*. See Drazin (2002) to learn about the energies postsocialist Romanians invest in caring for their apartments.
- 38 Slessor (2002).
- 39 See Casey (1996) and Turner on liminality (1967 and subsequent works). For example, Sierra Leoneans pour libations to the spirits of the dead just outside the thresholds of their homes as part of an act of communion with them.
- 40 Pesmen (2000b: 184).
- 41 Boym (1994).
- 42 See Dunham (1990) on Soviet “bourgeois” comforts.
- 43 Bershtein (2006).
- 44 See Bowen (2006); Eicher (1995); Göçek and Balaghi (1994); Mandel (1989); and Rowe (1998) among others.
- 45 Tatars living in the diaspora in Russia, Central Asia, Helsinki, Poland, or Burlingame, California or Australia may imagine Kazan as their ancestral homeland, even if they have little knowledge of it as a place.
- 46 The appropriate Russian way to cover your head with a scarf is to fold it in half diagonally, fold back an inch’s width of cloth along the length of the fold, which covers the front of one’s head, cross the two corners on either side of the face and tie them at the nape of the neck over the triangle that hangs in back. The Ukrainian way of headscarf tying differs from this in that the scarf is completely gathered off the neck’s nape.
- 47 Russians on occasion convert to Islam and adopt modest dress. In 2000 three Russians were reported to have converted to Islam the previous year.
- 48 Not wearing makeup is a highly marked practice in formerly socialist countries (Drakulic 1991).
- 49 See Bennigsen and Wimbush (1985) and Cocoran-Nantes (1995) on Islam during the Soviet period.
- 50 Cole (1994) claims that the veil plays a similar role in other Muslim societies.
- 51 The domains in which it was spoken had contracted, as had its overall functionality as a means of communication. Dorian (1981) writes on language death in general, while Wertheim (2003) has made a close analysis of the functional shrinkage of Tatar language among young Kazanians.
- 52 Wertheim (2003).
- 53 A birthday party I attended for a Tatar woman in her 80s provides a typical example of how gatherings in Tatar homes can become subjugated to Russian language. The birthday celebrant was Tatar-dominant, as were her two sisters and brother-in-law, also in attendance and hosting the party. Two of the sisters had worked in a factory before retiring at age 55, while the third sister had been one of Hayat *apa*’s teachers. The teacher’s husband had been an administrator at Kazan’s Tatar-language Kamal Theater for much of his life and was still revered there. All four were village born and bred. The younger relatives present ranged from passive to full bilinguals. The old couple has two adult children—an unmarried daughter and a married son—and one grandchild. The daughter, a schoolteacher like her mother, has a fairly good command of colloquial Tatar. The son, in his forties, used to be a skilled factory worker with a good salary, but has been doing odd jobs since his factory shut down in the late 1980s. He can manage a sentence at a time in Tatar, but not maintain a conversation. The son is married to a Russian from Kazakhstan. She has some passive knowledge of Tatar. When I met their

nine-year-old son in 1999, he appeared to be completely russophone. However, after going to a Tatar summer camp in 2000 in Finland, where there is a significant Tatar diaspora, he began to speak Tatar and to perform Muslim prayers. The other Tatar family members present were 50–60 years old and seemed fully bilingual. Apart from me, non-family members invited to the party included two Russian women with whom the birthday celebrant had worked in the factory. In deference to the Russian guests—no one would want them to feel excluded—the elder relatives spoke more Russian than they usually did at home. Most of the toasts at the event were made in Russian. Even when speakers began their toasts in Tatar, they tended to slip into Russian somewhere in the middle of their speeches. In fact, only the 86 year-old brother-in-law said a toast from start to finish in Tatar. Despite this, some Tatars who toasted entirely in Russian subsequently sang songs in Tatar. No Russian songs were sung. Over all, most conversation occurred in Russian, with some interjections and code-switching into Tatar.

54 See Wertheim (2003, 2006) for more on pure Tatar [*saf tatar tele*] and on performance Tatar as a speech genre.

55 Unlike most Tatar statements about verbal hygiene (Cameron 1995), this one concerns the hegemonic language.

56 The entire interchange was reported to me in Russian, as follows:

Khozyaika: Chego vy vsyo boltaete?

Kyzlar: Chto ona govorila?

Reixana: Ona skazala, "Pochemu vy tak tikho govorite? Ia khochu chtoby mne bylo slyshno."

Khozyaika: Pochemu vy tak shumite?

Kyzlar: Chto ona skazala?

Reixana: Khvatat' bol'tan'e. Ona khochet chtoby vy pesniu speli.

Kyzlar stali russkuju pesniu pet'.

Khozyaika: Khvatit. Ia vas vsekh vygoniu iz doma.

Kyzlar srazu zamolchali.

57 The assertion was not nationalist in Fasold's (1987) sense because the clerk switched to the hegemonic, nationalist language of Russian, to make herself understood.

58 The Tatarstan Academy's validity was called into question by a Tatarstan prosecutor in 2005, since it wasn't created at the behest of the Russian government. See "Prosecutor Questions Legal Status Of Tatarstan Science Academy," Daily Review from Tatarstan, RFE/RL Daily Tatar-Bashkir Service, 17 May 2005.

59 Wertheim (2006).

60 See Verdery (1996) on the economy of shortage under socialism and how it contrasts with western models of consumer-driven markets.

CHAPTER 6

KAZAN IN BLACK AND WHITE

“There isn’t any such awareness. That’s because there are dark-skinned Russians and you don’t know who’s Russian and who’s Tatar. When I walk around, I don’t feel swarthy. I don’t think about it at all. No one here pays attention. Turks come here and they look like Tatars. Azeris come and they look like Tatars...”

Älfiye, Tatar university administrator, January 2000

Älfiye is tall, gentle, classically beautiful, and gracefully slim—a university administrator in her forties with olive skin, black hair, and brown eyes that betray a profound weariness. She spoke here in response to a question I asked about whether an awareness of swarthiness [*smuglost*] exists in Tatarstan. The question came from a desire to understand whether Älfiye conceived of Tatarstan as different from the Russia she had just described in the story of a trip she once made to the central Russian city of Orel:

I traveled there with a friend. I’m Tatar and she’s Tatar. And I immediately felt that we were like some kind of Caucasians or Chechens. All of a sudden, I’m so black. Black hair. Black eyes. Swarthy skin. The children followed us around, staring like this.

Älfiye made a blank face with wide eyes and a gaping mouth.

Just like that. And the local people were all light. They all looked alike. They had small, light eyes and big noses. All very ugly.

She laughed.

The mayor of the town looked like that—light hair and eyes and a big nose. And everyone there looked like that. Apparently all part of the same family.

Älfiye’s story implies that inbreeding in Orel has caused everyone to look the same, while Kazan’s cosmopolitan variation means that people who are victims of discrimination, or even violence, in other parts of Russia are

safe here. Another implication—confirmed by several other Tatars—is that so many Russians in Kazan look “Asiatic” that Russians can’t insult “swarthy” strangers because they would inevitably end up victimizing one of their own.

The creation of racial categories always entails a distancing of the Self from an Other in ways that promote power relationships, beneficial to the people who designate them in ways that make for differential access to status, wealth and other resources.¹ While scholars have analyzed how the creators of racial categories use belief in immutable difference to make sense of the unknown, less attention has been paid to the experiences of the people who are racialized.² Enduring racism can entail tolerating insults, demeaning epithets, threats, and violence—the accumulation of which provokes a visceral reaction among people with the experience. While racialized people may make friends or even marry members of the dominant group, the experience of racism remains imprinted on their psyche and that imprint defensively dictates that people in the dominant group are fundamentally, essentially different from them and capable of betrayal. Feelings of racial difference run deep.

Not least because Tatars were Soviets, it’s not possible to identify a territorial boundary that separates post-Soviet from Tatar space or a historical moment that constitutes a clean break between Soviet and post-Soviet time. Moreover, descriptions of race ideologies only provide approximate models of how people think. Consequently, disentangling Soviet, post-Soviet, and Tatar ideas about race is both analytically and experientially difficult. Nonetheless, this chapter analyzes two competing racial ideologies circulating in Tatarstan—one widely prevalent in Russia, which is based on phenotype and nationality, and another local Tatar ideology that is tied to language, behavior, and religious faith. While the perception of pathologized darkness in the Other, in contradistinction to the light Self, prevails in both ideologies, the measure of difference is calculated using non-comparable criteria.

Race in Russia

In order to understand the consequences of racism in Russia, it is necessary to understand how race works there. Alexander Pushkin, the Russian poet of noble origin credited with creating Russian literary language in the early 19th century—when literate Russians were enamored with the delicate turns of phrase made in literary French—was the great grandson of an African

slave. There is no writer in Russian history considered to be more essentially Russian or a greater Russian genius than Pushkin, and yet when he studied at the Imperial Lyceum outside St. Petersburg, the other students took one look at his African features and nicknamed him “Monkey.”³

Like Pushkin’s poetry, the practice of calling unusual-looking people by derogatory names is a legacy passed down to present-day Russians. In cities outside Tatarstan, it has been common practice for Russians to arbitrarily insult people they identify as “black” by calling them “*chernaiia zhopa*” [black ass] or “*churka*” [nigger]—sometimes to their faces.⁴ In Kazan, Tatars have told me, the epithet was more mild—*chplashka* [little hat]—which refers to the yarmulke-like *töbäte* Tatar men traditionally wear. But Tatars only mentioned the *chplashka* epithet to me after 2000. While it looked like there was hope of creating an integrated Tatarstan nation, they spoke of being harassed not for looking Tatar, but for speaking Tatar.

Although race is not a term used in local discourse to describe essential difference, ex-Soviets nevertheless believe that there are categories of people essentially different from each other.⁵ And while race in the US and some other countries is based primarily on skin color, in the former Soviet Union essential difference—considered to be slippery, sometimes hidden, yet revealed “in the blood”—is defined by nationality.⁶ People refer to certain nationalities as “black”—Roma as well as Armenians, Georgians, Chechens and other people from the Caucasus Mountains region—or “southerners”—again Caucasians, and Tajiks, among others. They may call nationalities from the east, including native Siberians, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, and Uzbeks “*aziaty*”—a term always intoned with a derogatory sneer.

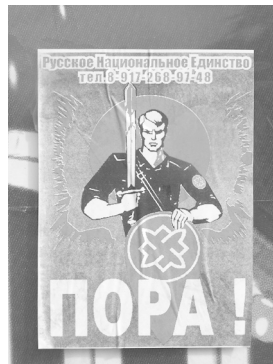


Figure 6.1. A Nazi Poster on Kazan Street, 2006

While ex-Soviets generally use phenotype to determine a person's essence, they also consider language to be a racial indicator.⁷ This tendency emerges from the Soviet ideology still resonating through school textbooks, mass media, and other authoritative sources that each nationality possesses a discrete national language and involves a kind of psychological juggling. On the one hand, people recognize that nationality is mutable and languages can be acquired. On the other, their gut reaction is that nationality and language reveal something about a person's deep and unchanging inner nature.

A law dating from the Stalinist period—no longer on the books, but nonetheless enforced once more beginning in the mid-1990s—requires everyone in Russia to carry an internal passport indicating domicile registration at a verifiable address.⁸ In most Russian cities, and Moscow in particular, the police habitually stop pedestrians to check their passports on the basis of external appearance or *vneshnii vid*.⁹ According to assassinated journalist Anna Politkovskaia, serving in Chechnya, where significant numbers of Russian police officers fulfilled their military duty, has made officers overly aware of what ex-Soviets call the “Caucasian type” and desensitized them to violence.¹⁰

In 2001, I met a pair of displaced Armenians from the Republic of Georgia who were living in Moscow. One was a university student and the other a young schoolteacher specializing in Russian literature. The student's university was able to provide her with the necessary documentation to register her passport at her Moscow address. The teacher's school, however, didn't have the appropriate bureaucratic authority to register her, and even though she lived and worked in Moscow, she was registered in another Russian city—the only place in the country where her family owned property. Police interference in the two women's everyday movement was never-ending and they were always on the lookout. When they saw police officers on the street, the women would split up. Believing that the undocumented schoolteacher looked “Russian,” they hoped the police would only stop the “Caucasian-looking” student, whose papers were in order. They told me that members of their community had been detained by the police and never heard from again. They also said that it was easy to bribe the police if you had any money—about \$2 was enough to get them to leave you alone, but they didn't have this kind of money, especially not to spend each time they were asked for their papers.

While I was in Moscow again in 2006 a nanny from Uzbekistan told me that an English family she had worked for the previous year had given her a laptop computer as a gift. The nanny had had to transport the com-

puter from the family's centrally located apartment to her rented room far outside town in a factory suburb, during which time she had been afraid that the police would stop her and take the computer away. The nanny recounted that she was delighted when she managed to get the laptop home because she could finally start corresponding by email with her daughter in Tashkent, whose education she was paying for out of her wages.

The anxiety these women suffer from is real. However, according to a report released by the Open Society Justice Institute in 2006, statistically, non-Slavic women are much less likely to be stopped by the police than men. While apparent non-Slavs made up less than 5% of metro riders observed in a 2005 study, they constituted over 50% of those the police stopped.¹¹

Race also matters in Russia because rates of racially based violence are on the rise. For instance, in 2005, Human Rights First reported that 31 people, including children, were murdered and 411 assaulted for racist reasons, while estimating that the real number of hate-based attacks is much higher, but not reported to the police because the authorities are reluctant to prosecute the crimes.¹² The numbers continue to increase year-by-year, with 97 murdered and 525 assaulted in 2008, up 13% from the previous year, according to the SOVA Center, a Russia-based NGO.¹³ What numbers cannot represent, however, is the tangible feeling that a wave of violence is threatening to rear up from beneath a veneer of social calm. Moreover, the numbers don't explain how race is understood in Russia. For example, why does Caucasian mean "black" in Russia, whereas in the US "Caucasian" is the bureaucratic term for whiteness?

The reason for this disparity is that race has no biological basis.¹⁴ Physical anthropologists have discovered that the genetic variation within any population we consider to constitute a race is greater than the variation between any two populations. Thus, only 6–10% of DNA accounts for genetic variation between the groups we classify as races, while 85% of variation occurs *within* linguistic or national populations.¹⁵ That is, scientific evidence does not support a link between racial phenotypes and genetic makeup. Consequently, social scientists have come to define race as the perception of immutable, essential difference—something created through social interactions—which makes race a real part of lived experience, but nonetheless accounts for the slipperiness of racial boundaries.¹⁶

In Tatarstan the situation is unusual with respect to the rest of Russia. Rates of marriage among different nationalities are high—until 1990, 20% republic-wide and 25% in Kazan.¹⁷ The children of mixed parentage mar-

riages as a rule consider themselves Russian, and become so linguistically and in bureaucratic records, such as their internal passports.¹⁸ Though Tatars began to give voice to negative attitudes towards intermarriage in the 1980s, there is no statistical evidence to demonstrate a change in practice.¹⁹ As a result, in Kazan the phenotypical markers Älfiye reported people in Orel employing to identify outsiders are unreliable. Police inspections target locations, notably the city's bazaars, where people from outside Russia do business, and are infrequent enough to make the evening news. And because Kazanians pay little attention to phenotype, language assumes primary importance as a racial identifier. While Russian monolinguals and Tatar bilinguals alike realize that languages are acquired, they nonetheless consider linguistic knowledge core to understanding who a person is.

Scratch a Russian...

Soviets tended to have ambivalent feelings about non-Russian nationalities. On the one hand, they sometimes totemized certain "noble" or "free" national minorities in cinema, literature, and stage performances.²⁰ On the other, in mixed company, Russian-identified people often considered it polite to overlook national difference, as if not being Russian were an unsightly handicap.²¹ Indeed, Soviet people often masked their non-Russianness, revealing when loosened up by drink the existence of Ukrainian, Polish, Caucasian, German, or other non-Russian ancestry.

By contrast, in post-Soviet Kazan, not only many Tatars, but also people of other nationalities, embrace and celebrate their non-Russianness. This is clearly illustrated by the changing fates of Russia's Volga Germans, whom Catherine the Great invited to the Middle Volga region from Germany in the 18th century. One of several nationalities Stalin deported wholesale as "Nazi collaborators" with 24 hours notice, on August 28, 1941, 750,000 Volga Germans were loaded into train cattle cars and forcibly removed to Central Asia, where they were dumped without provisions.²² The urban Germans died first and in the greatest numbers. However, because their constitutions were tougher, many rural Germans survived the harsh conditions of the Kazakhstan steppe.

While most Volga Germans stayed in Kazakhstan until the opportunity to "repatriate" to Germany arose after the Soviet Union's collapse, enough returned to Kazan to reestablish a Lutheran church congregation and run a community center. The Germans I met in Kazan told me that as children

they were called “fascists” and “enemies of the people” on a regular basis. One man who had tried to hide his nationality most of his life explained, “You end up being an enemy of your own country.” However, things have improved significantly, the same man acknowledged. “Brezhnev said that soon there wouldn’t be any Tatars, any Russians, but just one Soviet people...Now there is the development of nationality and that’s good because, without that, life loses a lot.”

The “development of nationality” that occurred during perestroika included a blossoming of interest in German identity. When Kazan University’s sole German instructor during late socialism told me about the first gathering of Kazan Germans in the mid-1980s, her eyes lit up. She recounted that the people who came filled a university lecture hall with the capacity to seat 500 people. All of them emigrated to Germany. She said that wave after wave of people came to learn about their German identity and then leave the country.

Germans, like other persecuted Soviets, often married outside their group in an effort to distance themselves from danger. At a Lutheran church service I met Rashid, whose mother was German. His father was a Tatar who met his wife while serving in the Volga German city of Saratov. Rashid told me that he knew Tatar and learned German when he was stationed in East Germany. As of 2000 he was leaning towards his maternal line of descent, ingratiating himself with Kazan’s German community, and hoping to emigrate. Similarly, a student I met at the Jewish School confessed that she is less than “half Jewish” by blood even though she has Jewish lineage on both her mother’s and father’s side. The Soviet Union’s collapse opened up opportunities for Rashid to become German and the student to become culturally Jewish.

These ethnic reconfigurations are part of a fluorescence of difference, an exploration of the realms of post-Soviet possibilities, that has occurred all over the former Soviet Union. They demonstrate the porosity of ethnic boundaries. Despite this, ex-Soviets in Tatarstan continue to evaluate national categories in binary absolutes—Russian or Tatar—using language as the primary indicator of identity. Illustrating this is an incident I observed in 2000 where linguistic knowledge was accepted as an ethnic boundary. It was the final exam for a group of russophone Tatarstan government bureaucrats who had just completed a two-month course in Beginning Tatar. The exam was oral. A panel of three examiners sat at a table at the front of the room. They summoned each student one by one and asked them questions such as “What is your name?” “Where do you work?” and “Describe your family.” One of the examiners was their

teacher, another the city administration bureaucrat who organized the program, and the third was an elderly Tatar gentleman the students had never seen before. When the unknown gentlemen entered the classroom, he asked the other examiners, “Who are they? [*Alar kemnär?*],” who responded, “Russians [*uryslar*],” which was inaccurate since there were three Tatars and a Chuvash among the students being tested.

At other oral exams, I likewise observed Tatar examiners referring to students who weren’t fluent in Tatar as “Russian,” though the students represented various nationalities. While using ethnic designations in exam situations reflect students’ level of language acquisition, one might expect the examiners, who are all bilinguals, to be aware of the complexity of the identities that lie behind the shorthand they use. But, this shorthand is in widespread use. Many Tatars gloss all non-Tatars as “Russian” because it is in opposition to Russian hegemony that they assert themselves.²³ Thus, even though people in Tatarstan seem singularly aware of the fact that ethnic identity can be shifting, multiply read, and based more than anything on behavior and participation in certain kinds of social networks, they frequently fall back upon essentialist models that link language with nation.

Social Evolution and Race

Even so, my conversations with Tatars indicate that they recognize national boundaries as unclear, and occasionally, arbitrary indicators of people’s essence. This is particularly apparent with regards to the plasticity of the boundaries that divide Tatars from Bashkirs, whose titular republic, Bashkortostan, lies on Tatarstan’s eastern border. According to the 2002 Russian census, 24% of Bashkortostan’s population is Tatar.²⁴ In the 1920s, when the republics were created, a quarter of Tatars in the Middle Volga region ended up in Bashkortostan.²⁵ However, because of their potential for cultural dominance, the Bashkortostan government refuses to grant Tatars living there full linguistic rights. This is both the product and cause of some bad feeling between Bashkirs and Tatars.

Bashkirs have historically been a minority in their own republic. In order to increase Bashkirs’ numbers (and thereby legitimate Bashkortostan’s existence), during the Soviet period, Bashkortostan Tatars were often persuaded to register as Bashkirs. Tatars considered this an undesirable step—Bashkirs are slated with lower status than Tatars in Soviet social evolutionary models—even though as a result they enjoyed the special privileges afforded members of a titular nationality, including education

and job opportunities. Several Tatars I met from Bashkortostan said that in the postwar period and again during Bashkortostan sovereignty Bashkortostan police confiscated Tatars' internal passports and changed their inscribed nationalities without permission.²⁶ Tatarstan Tatars are well aware of these actions. Some invoke it to justify their often-condescending attitude towards the Bashkir nationalist movement, which many consider inauthentic since, they insist, Bashkirs do not really exist as a nation.

At the same time, Tatars sometimes choose to see national differences between themselves and Bashkirs as essential. The following example demonstrates the simultaneous existence of a Soviet racial ideology in which essence gives rise to particular practices and a Tatar one according to which essence emerges from practice. Dilbara, a middle-aged schoolteacher specializing in English and French, has limited speaking ability in Tatar. She's nearly six feet tall, with dyed black hair, olive skin, beautifully pronounced cheekbones, and slit grey eyes. On one occasion when we were sitting in a Kazan café, I started probing her to expand upon ideas she had previously expressed with regards to racial difference, saying that I didn't understand how she could speak of Bashkirs, who share linguistic, historical, religious, and cultural similarities with Tatars, as Asian, and Tatars as European.

Dilbara put down her teacup and, as if to a small child, painstakingly explained to me that Bashkirs were Mongoloid, while Tatars are European. She noted that Bashkirs, Kazakhs, and Uzbeks are European by language group—by which she meant Turkic-speaking—but not by ethnic type. I questioned her explanation and she asserted that Tatars' predecessors were sedentary, while Bashkirs descend from bellicose, nomadic peoples. When I objected that her criteria relied upon defunct forms of economic organization, Dilbara eventually admitted that Tatars were a mixture of European and Asian peoples, though, she insisted, "In Tatars, the European had clearly won out," and cited the *Big Soviet Encyclopedia* as her authority. Later that day, Dilbara telephoned me at home to read me the definition of the "Asian-American race" from that encyclopedia, which encompassed all the "nomadic" peoples of Russia and Central Asia—including Bashkirs—as well as Native Americans. After she finished, I reiterated that I still considered the racial boundary between Tatars and Bashkirs artificial. Dilbara repeated that Bashkirs are bellicose and nomadic. She then added that they are heathens. "They have horses, nomadic dwellings, and *kumys*"—a drink made of fermented horse milk. "By contrast," she asserted, shifting the unit of analysis from purported practices to nationality, "Tatars are comprised of different nations—

Kalmyks, Bolgars, and Finns.”²⁷ However, on other occasions Dilbara informed me that most Bashkirs have a Tatar parent and they only choose Bashkir identity for pragmatic reasons. Despite the fact that Dilbara acknowledged that Bashkirs were not necessarily genealogically different from Tatars, she insisted that there were essential differences, for instance, that Tatars are clean, while Bashkirs are dirty—a quality she attributed to the latter’s nomadic way of life.

Dilbara’s opinions about Bashkirs demonstrate a complex interweaving of ideological strands about what makes for difference. In this interweaving, ascribed mode of production, as determined by the way Soviet ethnography employed social evolutionary models, not only creates groups ex-Soviets perceive as bounded, but freezes racial difference between them. Dilbara is aware that nationalities were ascribed as a result of people’s purported stage of evolutionary development and the machinations of nationality politics, which were usually mutually informing.²⁸ Even so, since she has absorbed notions of national and racial difference based upon Soviet ethnographic categories, in her mind the difference is absolute and immutable.

Competing Phenotypes

Ex-Soviets living in different regions of the USSR, and hence with different histories of social relations, possess varying ideas with regards to Tatars’ race. In Tatarstan, Tatars are generally considered to be European and white. As a Polish Kazanian complaining to me about practices of preferential admission to higher education institutes pointed out, “We have racism here too, but the difference is that we’re all white.” By contrast, in other European parts of the former Soviet Union, people think of Tatars as *aziaty* or even black. The head Tatar teacher at the English School told me she had lived in Ukraine for a year, where people didn’t believe she was Tatar. “They said that Tatars are black and have slanted eyes. They insisted that I must be a Jew.” They even decided that her name, Fäniye—derived from the Arabic word for science—was “really a Jewish name.” Similarly, Äminä Apakaeva told me that before the USSR’s collapse (when they could still afford such luxuries), she and her mother came home deeply tanned from a summer holiday in Crimea via Moscow. There they entered a store where a Russian clerk, shocked that they could speak Russian, mistook them for Arabs and had difficulty believing that such exotic people lived in the heart of Russia.

Russians living in Tatarstan often say they perceive Tatars as familiar, even frequently “forgetting” that most Tatars are Muslim. A Russian landlady I rented an apartment from in July 2001 complained, as she showed me around, about some Turks and Moroccans who had previously lived in the place. When I asked what they did, she responded mysteriously, “Muslims are strange people.” I pointed out that Tatars are Muslims too, to which she responded, “Tatars are different, not like other Muslims. They’re our own people.” Meanwhile, Central Asians have told me they consider Tatars European, essentially the same as Russians because Tatars colluded in advancing Russian imperialist aims in Central Asia. This illustrates the extent to which racial perceptions are about power.

Soviet sources refer to Chingis Khan’s Great Horde as the Tatar-Mongol Invasion and the Golden Horde’s rule as the Tatar-Mongol Yoke.²⁹ Among the ranks of Chingis Khan’s invading army was a conquered tribe called “Tatar,” who fought in the avant-garde.³⁰ Because they encountered Tatars first, subjugated people identified the whole invading apparatus as “Tatar.”³¹ Russians subsequently imposed the ethnonym “Tatar” upon all Muslims and Turkic-speakers absorbed into the Russian Empire before the 19th century, effectively equating the invaders with indigenous people. Some contemporary “Tatars” refuse that ethnonym, preferring to call themselves Kazan Turks or Bolgars, after the city-state conquered by the Great Horde in 1236.³² Many Russians outside Tatarstan blame the “Mongol-Tatars” for what they consider to be Russia’s backwardness and brutality. Occasionally, they criticize Europe for its lack of thankfulness—after all, Russia bore the brunt of the Tatar yoke and acted as a buffer, thereby saving Europe from being overrun. When engaging in this rant, Russians not only exoticize Tatars by making them into racial others, but they conflate the Mongol leaders of the Golden Horde state with present-day Tatars living in their midst.

Russians who complain of the “Mongol-Tatars” use the invocation not only to explain what they perceive as the entire country’s backwardness, but also their own status as not quite European, not quite “white.”³³ Russians see their not-quite-white status both as an impediment to a “normal” standard of living and the source of an admirable exoticness “in the blood.” They frequently discuss how they look typically Tatar or obviously have some Tatar blood in their genealogical woodpiles. For example, early in our friendship a woman I know in St. Petersburg (who happens to be of Karelian descent, but identifies as “Russian”) explained that she was different from me by pointing to her slanted “Tatar” eyes—the implication being that they were the result of centuries of “Mongol-

Tatar” rule. She thus deployed Tatariness as a trope for explaining Russian exoticness to an outsider, somewhat comparable to how she and other Russians invoke the “Russian soul.”³⁴

While the stereotypes of Russians as light-haired and light-skinned and Tatars as dark-haired, slant-eyed, and high-cheekboned are in circulation in Tatarstan, they aren’t dominant the way they are in other parts of the former Soviet Union. When non-Tatars in Kazan point out features they consider indicative of Tatar phenotypes, they are not distancing themselves from the rest of “white people,” but rather, attempting to demonstrate their inherent connections to Tatars. This is because Kazanians recognize two nested ideologized phenotypes for Tatars.

The first phenotype Tatarstan people recognize is the “Mongol type.” The Mongol type conforms to notions among European Soviets from outside Tatarstan about what Tatars look like. The stereotype implies that Tatars originated as Mongol invaders from the east, who destroyed Russia in the 13th century and then ruled it despotically. It suggests that Tatars are not indigenous to Russia. Consequently, acceptance of the existence of the Mongol type as characteristically Tatar intimates that Tatars do not have the right to claim Russia as their homeland and that they are not entitled to the same rights accorded to indigenes. Most important among these rights, considering Tatars’ precarious position within the Russian Federation, is the right to be considered authentic patriots.

In the fall of 1999, during a conversation with a class of Tatar teenagers at the Lab School, I asked what Tatars look like. They pointed out the girl in the class who, several agreed, represented the Mongol type. She had olive skin, a long, thin face, brown hair and slanted brown eyes. To demonstrate the veracity of her classmates’ assertion, the girl pulled up the outer corners of her eyes with her index fingers in order to show me that she had “eyes like this.”

As soon as the Mongol type girl pulled up the outer corners of her eyes, another girl—with mahogany hair, coffee-with-cream skin and dark almond-shaped, sparkling eyes—protested. “Real Tatars are redheads! They have light skin and green eyes.” This is a description of the “Bolgar type,” that is, what people living in the city-state of Bolgar at the time of Chingis Khan’s invasion are supposed to have looked like. Talk of the Bolgar type almost always occurs after reference to the Mongol type. It acts as a refutation of the accusation that Tatars are Asian others—invaders from the East—and an assertion that they belong in the Middle Volga region.

The adolescents’ explanations of what Tatars look like echo discussions I often heard in the company of adults. These adult discussions usu-

ally took place without my prompting and, as the children's ready exclamations demonstrate, must have been transpiring in my absence. Tatars' devotion to evaluating phenotypical stereotypes implies that discourses on race have deep ideological significance for them. It likewise suggests that these stereotypes compete for dominance within two overlapping power structures—one Russian and one Tatarstan—in which each stereotype is “true.”³⁵ Yet, at least for the time being, Tatar-speakers accept the coexistence of both ideologized phenotypes.

Performing Race

In the 1930s Joseph Stalin commissioned the great film director Sergei Eisenstein to make a trilogy celebrating the legacy of Ivan the Terrible as the founder of the Russian state. He ordered Eisenstein to base his films on the adulatory book *Ivan Grozny* (1922) by Robert Wipper, a Soviet historian of German descent.³⁶ Stalin approved of the first film in the trilogy. The second film was soundly criticized for ideological inaccuracies. The third was never made.

Ivan the Terrible, part I (1944) is a brilliant and stirring work of art, created during a period of surging Russian nationalism, which features an ominous soundtrack by Sergei Prokofiev. Shot in black and white in the barren steppes of Kazakhstan—to which Mosfilm had been evacuated during World War II—its exaggerated film noiresque portrayals of Russia in the Middle Ages possess a captivatingly nightmarish quality. The film portrays Tatars, the first non-Christians Ivan subjugated during Muscovy's military expansion, as Asian savages. While *lubok* paintings and other medieval representations of Russians and Tatars don't show the two groups as phenotypically different from each other, *Ivan the Terrible* does.³⁷

Resembling no Tatars I've ever seen, the Tatars in the film have dark brown skin, high cheekbones, black hair, and slanted eyes. They exhibit bloodthirsty tendencies and non-native speech patterns. They rudely storm into Ivan's castle and present him with a knife, suggesting that he should use it to kill himself. Then, when Ivan, justified by Tatar provocation, advances on Kazan—a pathetic citadel atop a mound in the middle of a desert plain—the Tatars brutally slay each other, rather than meeting death at the hands of “uncircumcised heathens.” The film presents Tatars as bloodthirsty “insolent foreigners,” as Ivan calls them, who cannot speak Russian properly and make vain threats, immediately cowering when confronted with the righteous, popular, and courageous Ivan.

Other than the imam who proclaims that Tatar prisoners should die at Tatar hands, *Ivan the Terrible*'s only speaking Tatar character delivers his lines in accented Russian, boorishly coarse and full of grammatical and phonological mistakes. He addresses Ivan using the informal *ty*, instead of *vy*; uses an imperative verb form when he should use a third-person, singular ending; pronounces [k] as [g], rounds [o]s that should be schwas, says [iu] instead of [u]; pronounces [k] as [ts], and [sk], [ts], and [kh] as explosives. A translation of his speech into English might read, "Kazan breaks its friendship Moscow. The alliance for Moscow ends. To Moscow with war goes...Kazan big. Moscow small. Moscow is finited. Our great khan present send. Rustian czar—do not make shame. Rustian czar—finite with yourself."³⁸

This speech is based upon a Chinese-Russian pidgin, attributed to Siberian natives, which sociolinguist Johanna Nichols has identified in Russian texts dating from the 19th century and earlier. Nichols argues that this stereotypical Siberian way of talking, which includes an entire body of grammatical and lexical traits, serves to mark speakers as "racially Asian" and over time has degraded them "into a virtual parody of the inarticulate, irrational Other."³⁹ This tradition continued well into the 20th century and can be glimpsed in Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Alexander Rublev* (1966), which depicts Asiatic Tatars butchering Russian grammar while they take advantage of Russian half-wit girl.



Figure 6.2. "Tatars" in Eisenstein's film, *Ivan the Terrible*

A few years before *Ivan the Terrible*, part I appeared in Soviet movie theaters, the first Tatar opera, *Altynchäch*, was staged in Kazan. It was created by Tatar dramaturg and founder of the Tatar State Theatre of Opera and Ballet, Musa Jälil. Jälil was a prolific writer and Head of the Tatar Writers Union when he entered the Soviet Army to fight in World War II. Taken prisoner by the Nazis in 1942, he was executed in 1944 for attempting to organize a prison break. Until 1953, when the poems Jälil wrote in prison were first published in the USSR, he was considered a traitor to the Soviet state, which posited that all POWs colluded with the Nazis. In 1957 Jälil was posthumously granted an Order of Lenin.

Altynchäch, which won a Stalin Award in 1941, attempts to refute accusations that Tatars are external others by depicting them as a peaceful peasant community of European Bolgars enslaved by Asian invaders.⁴⁰ *Altynchäch*—"Goldenhair" in Tatar—is the lead female character, a sweet, modest, blonde-haired Bolgar maiden. The lead villain is Kolaxan, an invader resembling the Tatars in *Ivan the Terrible*, whose Asianness is indicated by his nomadic costume and slanted eyes and high cheekbones. Kolaxan's other Asian attributes include a court full of near-naked belly dancers—shocking by comparison to the modestly dressed Bolgar maidens, a dancing Chinaman with impossibly long fingernails, and some visitors in fezzes from the Ottoman Empire. The opera's plot is simple. When Kolaxan discovers a golden strand of *Altynchäch*'s hair in the forest where she had been picking berries with her girlfriends, he feels compelled to capture her in hopes of making her his wife. *Altynchäch* resists Kolaxan's advances and eventually regains her freedom.

Ivan the Terrible represents Russians as having no ties to the Golden Horde, even though Muscovy acquired political power because of its efficiency at extracting tribute on the Golden Horde's behalf. Similarly, *Altynchäch* presents Tatars as victims of the Golden Horde. Though *Altynchäch*'s plot bears a similarity to Pushkin's epic poem *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, with Kolaxan's character playing a comparable role to the evil sorcerer Chernomor, the opera's implications extend beyond the medieval fairytale motif of knightly chivalry and captured maidens. In the Soviet period, the hegemonic understanding of bride capture was as a throwback to barbaric and "Asian" tribalism, and nothing has changed since.⁴¹ As an acquaintance from a central Russian town crudely joked when I told him what this book was about, "Tatars raped my grandmother," a claim similarly made by the opera *Altynchäch*. Victimized by bride capture, the Bolgars in *Altynchäch* become representationally allied with Russians and distinguished from the Asian invaders.

According to the program for sale at the performance I saw in 1999—printed in Tatar, Russian, and English—the opera is historically accurate in showing how Bolgars maintained their independence under Mongol rule. Many of the participants in that production were either Russian—for example, the producer—or closely allied with Russian institutions, such as Moscow’s Bolshoi Theater. The role of Tugzak—described in the program as a legendary figure symbolizing the Tatar homeland—was sung by someone with a Russian name. The Tatar friend I watched *Altynchäch* with wasn’t sure if the artist was Russian or not, since she sang in Tatar. Her reaction reveals how knowing Tatar language trumps other indicators of identity.

Altynchäch provides Tatars with the opportunity to perform themselves as the Bolgar type. As Bolgars, they are European, indigenous to the Middle Volga region, sedentary, civilized, modest in dress and behavior, and ideally blonde. That *Altynchäch* not only embraces and reproduces Soviet representations of racial difference, but also continues to be staged, demonstrates that Stalin-period racial ideologies continue to enjoy authority. Being perceived as enemies of the Soviet state during Stalin’s rule resulted in arrest, execution and forced exile. Consequently, during sovereignty, Tatars were careful to emphasize that they were indigenous to the Middle Volga region and European.⁴²

Tatar Faces

Though it is difficult to know who is who in Kazan, people do nevertheless attempt to gauge difference and similarity on the basis of phenotype. Tatars generally confided more easily in two dark-skinned, dark-haired American women whose stays overlapped with mine than they did in me—a bleached blonde with fair skin. Moreover, no one used Tatar with me as a first language of interaction, unless instructed to do so, though people invariably accepted the possibility that I might be a Tatar once they heard me speak. Thus, while Tatars say that they don’t pay attention to phenotype in their assessments of a stranger’s essence, they nevertheless do. All the same, language is a higher order indicator of essence than phenotype.⁴³

Claims that Tatars and Russians make regarding a lack of awareness of phenotype contribute to the amicable relationships among nationalities in Tatarstan. At the same time, the persistence with which Tatarstan Russians declare their similarity to Tatars manifests their displeasure with Tatar demands for attention to how they are different from Russians. Be-

cause Russians feel that they have been polite by ignoring Tatars' nationality like an embarrassing physical disability, they are confounded by the appearance of Tatar nationalist feelings, seemingly out of nowhere. Thus, Tatarstan Russians' inattention to phenotype stems not only from a perceived mutual likeness, but also from a desire to erase difference and live in an integrated fashion with those Tatars who do not insist upon speaking Tatar and engaging in other non-Russian behaviors.

Unlike Russians living elsewhere, when Tatarstan Russians talk of how they look Tatar, they are not making reference to their own "backwardness" vis-à-vis the citizens of countries more prosperous than Russia. My first Russian landlady in Kazan, Alevtina, was an overall unsavory person—had a bad character, as people say there. For example, Alevtina rented me a filthy, run-down apartment at top dollar and then complained about performing maintenance to prevent the decrepit, carbon-encrusted hot water heater from catching fire. Alevtina was also a national chauvinist. The evening I agreed to move into her place, she showed me, at my request, the location of the nearest grocery store. As we walked across the courtyard behind the building towards the street, she asked me how I liked Kazan. I responded that I liked it very much. "People are so nice, especially in comparison to other parts of Russia I have visited." She interjected with sudden venom, "But, the Tatars are nasty! Everything was fine and then all the Tatars became nationalists." On other occasions, she told me that the Tatar language was too simplistic for sophisticated communication and once she referred to Fäüzia Bäyräмова, Tatarstan's most vociferous Tatar nationalist, as "that idiot, who only became a nationalist to make money" (though she didn't repeat those words when I recorded her views on tape). At the same time, Alevtina, a redhead with high cheekbones, green eyes, and saffron skin, considered herself to have a typically Tatar face. She claimed to have lots of Tatar friends and to know Tatar language (the latter claim was patently untrue).

Another Russian woman I knew in Kazan, a self-centered old maid who considered it insulting when Tatars speaking among themselves didn't switch to Russian when she came within earshot of their conversations, told me that she frequently gets mistaken for a Tatar. She has grey hair, cheekbones set high in her broad face, large round grey eyes, a small nose and a full mouth. She said, particularly when she goes to the public bathhouse, and wears no clothing or jewelry that mark nationality, Tatar women approach her and say things to her in Tatar she doesn't understand. This woman is enchanted with her own looks and didn't seem to find being mistaken for a Tatar to diminish them in any way.

A third Russian woman, Nadezhda, married into a Tatar family, a family so Tatar, a mutual acquaintance once joked that they barely speak Russian. Unlike Alevtina and the vain pensioner, Nadezhda isn't mistaken for Tatar. However, her in-laws call her a "black Russian" because of her dark coloring and she frequently expresses her solidarity with them by calling attention to her high cheekbones and stating that she must have some Tatar ancestry.

Tatar Racial Ideologies

While Soviet racial ideologies dictate that national difference is biological, Tatarstan ones contend that differences between people become essential and immutable through repeated practices. Tatar ideas about racial difference tend to be shaped more by interchanges between people than they are by more typical racial indicators, such as phenotype, blood, or genealogy. The interchanges which reveal essential difference, and even create it, occur within a certain emotional range—almost like a musical key—and are expressed as part of particular linguistic practices.⁴⁴ Tatars not only consider that a person's essence reveals itself through behavior, but also that repeated behavior affects that essence.⁴⁵ And while people who identify as members of other nationalities in Tatarstan do not explicitly state this opinion, they nevertheless often adhere to it in practice.

The idea that behavior can alter essence, as opposed to the notion that essence makes for certain kinds of behavior, bears some structural similarities to Islam. Being a Muslim is a journey involving an ongoing series of repeated practices that shape a person's inner constitution and outward demeanor. According to the Quran, the only requirement for becoming a Muslim is the declaration of faith, which constitutes submission to God's will, and acknowledgment of Muhammad as God's prophet. Muslims are supposed to strive towards fulfilling the other four pillars of Islam according to their individual abilities.⁴⁶ Over time this striving—*jihad*—brings the faithful closer to achieving a life lived in harmony with God's wishes.

The pillar that has the most salient effect on how Muslims live everyday is *namaz*—called *salat* in Arabic—the ritual prayers adherents perform five times daily. The first prayers are said before dawn and the last long after sundown, at prescribed times that vary throughout the year according to the number of hours of daylight. *Namaz* requires dedicated discipline and calendrical regulation. During *namaz*, Muslims say prayers in Arabic they may not understand and progress through a series of movements that bear a similarity to yogic poses. In addition to its poten-

tial physical benefits, *namaz* is an act of meditation that ideally provides adherents a grounding moment of renewed purpose away from the hubbub of daily life. It is an act of remaking the self.

At the same time, the belief that practice alters essence recalls the genetics of Trofim Lysenko, Director of the Soviet Academy of Genetics from 1940–1964. Lysenko didn't believe in Darwinian natural selection. Rather, he posited that characteristics acquired during the lifetime of an organism could be passed on to its offspring.⁴⁷ While Tatar ideas about race contain elements antithetical to Soviet ideologies that treat race as an immutable absolute, they nonetheless bear a resemblance to Lysenkan genetics, with its relationship to ideas about the new Soviet man in circulation during the Soviet period.⁴⁸

Race and Language Choice

By 1989, according to historian Uli Schamiloglu, who visited the city for the first time that year, Kazan was almost completely russophone. The only people he observed speaking Tatar in public were women past retirement age for whom not assimilating would no longer entail a threat to their careers or well-being. Introducing republic-wide bilingual education in 1993 profoundly changed that situation. Since the 1980s, more and more people speak Tatar in public domains—on public transportation, on the streets and in businesses, cultural institutions, and government offices.

Really speaking Tatar, as opposed to greeting people with a pragmatic *Isänmesez*, implies connection to a system of nuanced linguistic practices and cultural values. This system is historically tied to the emotional values Tatar-speakers uphold as proper and about which Russian-speakers are largely ignorant. Consequently, as in all asymmetrical bilingual situations, speaking or not speaking a particular language emerges from deep feelings about likeness and difference.⁴⁹

During sovereignty, deciding whether Tatar or Russian was the appropriate language to speak in any particular situation caused confusion for outsiders and partial bilinguals just learning the rules for bilingual interactions. At the same time, the conventions were changing, in part as a result of the introduction into the social field of new speakers—mostly passive bilinguals who were activating their dormant knowledge. In 2000, how bilingual speakers chose which language—or code—to use followed a hierarchy of decision-making criteria, as represented here, based upon observation and verified for accuracy with native experts.

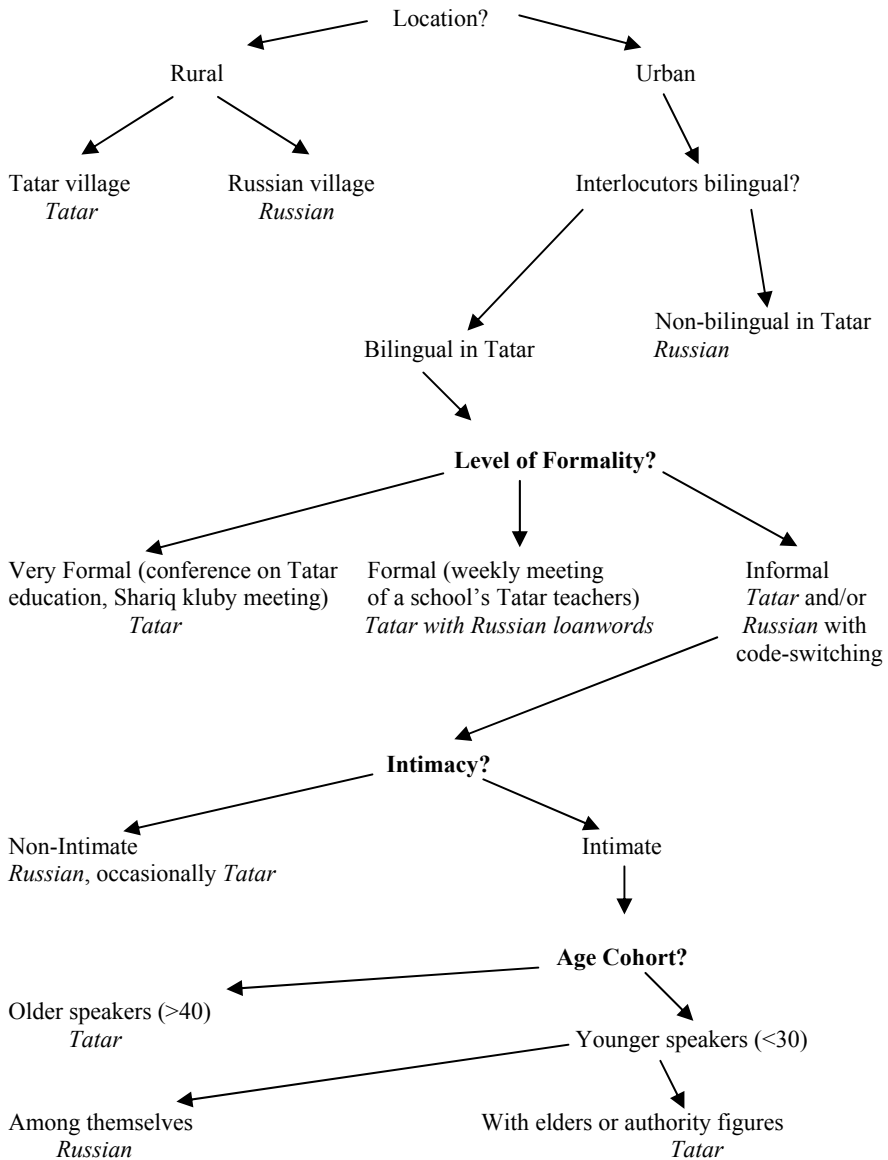


Figure 6.3. Code Choice Tree—Tatarstan, 2000

What this tree makes clear is that the circumstances in which Tatar was spoken in 2000 were particular and few, while Russian was nearly ubiqui-

tous and omnitemporal. The tree doesn't adequately account for all observed behavior, both because individual agency is unpredictable, and more importantly, because the rules for interaction were in flux. Instead, it captures a synchronic moment in which Soviet and post-Soviet linguistic conventions coexisted. Since sovereignty's demise, the choice has become easier. While Tatar-speakers are freer to use their language in public without fear of harassment and do so more than they used to in non-intimate and informal domains, they are less likely to speak Tatar to strangers. In 2000, however, the question of which to speak in what contexts was highly contested.

Suppliant Citizens

The Soviet Union's centralized administration was highly bureaucratic and encouraged a culture of rudeness among people with even a modicum of institutional power. To this day, if a post office, train station, state-run store, or other government building has an entrance with double doors, one is always locked. Those wanting to enter a building have to queue for the chance to do so, forcing them to measure their steps to comply with the movements of the other people making their way indoors and placing them in a subordinate position with respect to the authorities they encounter once inside.⁵⁰ Individuals seeking services become suppliants who frequently have to bend over and speak to government employees through narrow slits in wooden shutters or sheets of plexiglas. They speak with the knowledge that these openings may be slammed shut in their faces at any moment for no clear reason. Not knowing what language to use to approach a postal or sales clerk, a bank teller, or a librarian can exacerbate already-existing feelings of anxiety. Because of the radical uncertainty—both political and economic—of post-Soviet life, being able to personalize interactions with non-intimates in order to maximize network-building possibilities remains extremely important. Thus, Russian-speakers who sell goods at Kazan's bazaars study Tatar so as to increase their sales volumes.⁵¹ Even as people in Kazan become more differentiated from each other, it becomes ever more vital for them to be able to find commonalities.⁵²

Besides conducting business at work and in public spaces like post offices and banks, two activities in which almost all city residents participate are traveling on public transportation and shopping in food stores and markets. Although the number of private vehicles is growing, most fami-

lies only have one. As a result, everyone has experience riding public transportation, which almost always entails communication with strangers. Passengers need to speak to purchase their tickets from conductors or drivers, ask other passengers to pass their fares forward on crowded buses, or to inquire whether the people standing between them and the door are getting off at the next stop. And even though the number of self-serve grocery stores in Kazan has steadily increased since 1991, shopping at them remained a relatively rare practice in the early 21st century. The commodities sold in self-service stores were pricey for all except New Russians, as the *nouveaux riches* who benefited from state collapse were called.⁵³ The more conventional, Soviet-type shops, which were still in the majority as of 2006, required customers to ask clerks for items kept out of reach behind counters. Moreover, because of the command economy's chronic shortages—during late socialism the Moscow–Kazan train was jokingly called the Kolbasa Train because it was always packed with meat passengers brought home—these conversations contain the heteroglossic echoes of previous appeals to clerks to hand over hoarded goods.⁵⁴ In the late 1990s the main shortage was of money to pay for goods.

For people without knowledge of the subtle pragmatics of code choice, in the 1980s–1990s Kazan's sociolinguistic field was nearly unnavigable. Even when Russian-dominant people could manage a few words in Tatar, they couldn't always be sure who was Tatar and who wasn't. Moreover, if they identified someone as Tatar, that person might not have functional capacity in the language. Using Tatar with strangers who feel uncomfortable speaking the language can be as big a gaffe as speaking Russian to someone who prefers Tatar. Despite the fact that Soviet minority nationalities were previously shamed for speaking their "barbaric" languages in the presence of Russians, ironically in the post-Soviet period non-Russians feel shame for not knowing their "native tongues" fluently. Accordingly, speaking Tatar to a Tatar who is not fully bilingual can elicit reactions of embarrassment or anger. Likewise, making the mistake of speaking Tatar to an ethnic Russian can cause offense. Both may result in an infelicitous conclusion to a desired transaction.

Although sovereignty meant that Tatar-speakers became freer to use a language other than Russian in Kazan's public spaces, pressures to use Russian still persisted not, as before, because daring to use another language was discouraged through petty acts of ostracism, like being forced off public transport, or more serious consequences, such as loss of employment or imprisonment on charges of bourgeois nationalism. Rather, promoting bilingualism complicated Kazan's sociolinguistic field. It was

often easier not to insult people and thereby lose face by using the default language in conversations with strangers. At the same time, speaking Russian did not guarantee speakers the access to special privileges of intimacy so necessary to negotiating everyday life in the ex-Soviet Union. During sovereignty the uncertainty concerning which language to speak in buses, stores, markets and similar public places was palpable. Since sovereignty has waned, however, this uncertainty has yielded to an expectation that one should speak Russian with strangers, though the social structures created during sovereignty persist.

Language and Emotion

Beyond the anxiety created by not knowing how to verbalize appeals for life's necessities, language choice is emotional because it taps into linguistic practices that convey cultural values. Kazan bilinguals have generally held the opinion that speaking Tatar connotes intimacy and solidarity and perceive Russian as a non-intimate code associated with authority, status, power, and even brutality.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, speaking Tatar to a Tatar fluent in the language can also be inappropriate. Conversing in Tatar or certain other non-Russian Soviet languages in public marks a person as a rural migrant, that is, "uncultured" and "ill-mannered," in Hayat *apa's* words, as well as uneducated and an outsider in Kazan. Thus, speaking Tatar to a Tatar-speaking stranger may be understood not as an expression of solidarity, but rather as an affront because it presumes intimacy.⁵⁶ Moreover, since Russian has historically been used as the language of authority, approaching someone in Tatar may be interpreted as an attempt to undermine that person's institutional clout.

An example from my first trip to Kazan in 1997 should clarify how Tatars can perceive the oppositional roles of Tatar and Russian languages. One fine June day, two proper-looking middle-aged ladies were riding in the no. 4 trolley from Gorky Park towards Freedom Square, conversing quietly in Tatar. Standing a few feet away from them were three boys, around 7–8 years old, traveling by themselves. The boys were talking loudly in Tatar, fidgeting and moving about carelessly in the manner of little boys. One of the ladies pulled herself even more erect, interrupted what she was saying to her companion in Tatar, turned to the boys, and reprimanded them in Russian: "**Ne khuliganite!**" [Stop acting like hooligans!] The lady then turned back to her companion and resumed speaking Tatar. She used Russian as the language of authority to enforce Tatar norms of behavior.

How speaking Russian reinforces institutional authority in post-Soviet Kazan may similarly be seen in a series of infelicitous exchanges I had with the woman who managed the xerox department in the National Library's main branch. In our first encounter, I didn't follow protocol when presenting her the newspaper articles I needed copied and she began to chastise me in Russian for not knowing how to do things correctly. After hearing her address someone else in Tatar, I realized she was a Tatar-speaker and tried to ameliorate our relations by talking to her in that language. Unlike most Tatar-speakers I met who happily spoke Tatar with me, the xerox department manager refused to acknowledge my code shift and maintained Russian in all our subsequent exchanges. Eventually our relations broke down completely. She complained that her work collective could no longer make my copies—despite the fact, another librarian informed me, that they received a commission on each copy made—because it was too much work. Her final words on the matter were, “We don't even have time to drink tea [*My dazhe chai pit' ne uspevaem*].” Had our interactions taken place in Tatar, it might have been harder for her to assert this refusal. Speaking Russian allowed her to maintain emotional distance and be rude and arbitrary in her decision-making.

My inclination to make this interpretation is prompted by another incident in which refusal to speak Tatar was employed to maintain emotional distance. The final conversation I had with one of my research assistants, Elvira, was a falling out. I broke contact after we had several disagreements over money. During a subsequent trip to Kazan, I didn't get in touch with her and she tracked me down, telephoning me the evening before my departure. Her tone was bullying and aggressive—“How dare I not call her when she was my friend?” During our half-hour long dispute, Elvira rebutted all my efforts to converse in Tatar, which I knew better than she did by then, repeatedly using Russian to respond to my Tatar utterances. Elvira's refusal to switch into Tatar differed significantly from our usual speech pattern of moving back and forth between the two languages. Since Tatar was a language she used only with her closest family members, it constituted the most intimate code in her repertoire. That is, Tatar was a language through which Elvira expressed solidarity and love rather than status or authority. Thus, I believe Elvira felt too vulnerable when speaking Tatar to keep her guard up and put up a good fight. Moreover, her disinclination to argue in Tatar seems to dovetail with the Tatar cultural prohibition against arguing. If she had allowed the switch to Tatar, she would have been obligated to engage in negotiation, not accusation.

Like Heaven and Earth

When I asked Tatar children at the Lab School whether Tatars and Russians are different, the quickest among them exclaimed, without pausing to think, "Like Heaven and Earth." When I probed deeper, I found that the children's sense of immutable difference between themselves and Russians was based as much or more upon their perceived emotional disposition as upon what Russians looked like. This discovery was upheld by the racial ideologies the school's Tatar and Russian teenagers explicitly articulated, as well as those elicited from them experimentally.

During a visit to Kazan in 1998 I polled the adult Tatars I met to learn what makes Tatars and Russians different. Their most frequent answer was that a room full of Tatars would probably contain more brunettes, suggesting that little attention was paid to phenotype. In an attempt to disprove this hypothesis, I developed two simple experiments for eliciting phenotypical stereotypes, which I introduced during my first meetings in 1999 with the self-identified Russian, Tatar, and Jewish children to whom I gave conversational English lessons at the Lab and Jewish Schools.⁵⁷

The first experiment consisted of asking each child to draw a picture of his or her family members and then describe their physical features in detail. To provide an example and ease the children's embarrassment about their claimed lack of drawing skill, I sketched pictures of my own family on the classroom chalkboard, calling attention to features considered racial elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. Each time, I described my father as having dark skin, my mother as light, and myself as somewhere in between. I also called attention to my father's large nose, but not out of context with respect to the other physical features I noted. Only at the Jewish School did one boy, who tries to pass as a Jew even though he's an Orthodox Christian, react by exclaiming, "Your father's Jewish!" In all the classes where I conducted this exercise the children responded most to the large paunch I gave the family cat, which they found to be very funny.

Describing their own pictures, Tatar, Russian, and Jewish children all paid careful attention to eye and hair color, face (usually "round") and nose shape ("straight" or "upturned"), and eyebrow thickness. However, despite my cue that darkness and lightness were potentially important features, none of the hundred or so children I tried this experiment with mentioned skin color.⁵⁸ Nor did they say anything about high cheekbones, slanted eyes, or other racialized features. I showed the pictures the children had drawn to several adults and asked their opinion. Everyone I con-

sulted replied that children are not aware of phenotype and asserted that there is no racism in Tatarstan. These results differ significantly from Hirschfeld's findings in the US, where children demonstrate a high degree of awareness of phenotype as a gauge of essential, racial difference.⁵⁹

In the second experiment I showed eleventh grade Tatar and Russian classes at the Lab School and seventh-eighth grade children at the Jewish School photographs of people and asked them who was in them and how they knew. Their sensitivity to nationality as a primary identity was so high that in response to the question "Who are they?" the children invariably replied "Tatar," "Russian," or occasionally "Jewish!" I found that they consistently made mistakes in identifying people's nationalities based upon criteria for differentiation of which they were dead certain.

When I showed photographs of a birthday party to a group of 16-year-old Tatar children, a girl who had previously asserted that darkness was a Tatar trait said she recognized the two Russian guests not because of their comparative "lightness," but because Tatar women like to wear their hair smoothed away from their foreheads, preferably covered by a scarf, while the Russian women had puffed up, permed hair. The children also pointed out that the Russians looked "so grave," while all the Tatars were smiling. They decided that the only child in the photograph—a brunette whose mother is Russian and father Tatar—was Tatar because "He's such a handsome boy," but mistook his Tatar uncle for Russian.

I spent less time with a Russian class of 16-year-olds at the Lab School than I did with their Tatar peers because they shunned me after I showed them western press coverage on the war in Chechnya. However, while I still held their interest, I asked them, as I did nearly everyone I met in Kazan, how Russians and Tatars are different from each other. In response they listed the stereotypical features of the Mongol type—high cheek bones, dark skin, narrow eyes, and black hair. As with the Tatar class, the Tatar children in the Russian class often described their own nationality in ways that didn't match their appearances. Additionally, they claimed that some features Tatars consider to be Tatar were in fact Slavic—their own group of self-identification. They told me that Slavs have broad foreheads and that they smile openly from their souls [*dushevno*], which is similar to Tatars' understanding of open countenance or *achyk bet* described below. Recalling both Lysenkan genetics and Tatar ideologies that practice generates essence, one of the Russian children made an oblique reference to historical narratives that equate Tatars with Mongols. She carefully explained to me that Tatars have narrow eyes due to centuries of living on the open steppe where they had to squint against a constant wind. To drive

her point home, she stood up and narrowed her eyes as she peered across an imaginary steppe. When I pointed out that Tatarstan is densely forested and therefore not the steppe, neither she nor the other children had anything to say in response.

During a later session I showed the same birthday party photographs to the Russian class. They recognized the two Russian guests as Russian because, they said, they had open, smiling expressions, in contrast to the “dour-faced” Tatars. Based upon this assumption, they likewise mistook several Tatars in the photographs for Russians.

Some of the children’s mistakes, I propose, come from their experiences of interacting with strangers, for they all mistook people they saw to be smiling for members of their own nationality. However, they perceived smiling differently, which indicates that children of different nationalities learn culturally specific emotional expressions. This, in turn, suggests that the profound differences Russians and Tatars perceive in each other are based upon something much deeper than the state-imposed category of nationality.

The Light of Faith

Kazan Tatars say that *iman nury*—the light of faith—emanating from a person’s face is an indicator of his or her internal composition. For Tatars *iman nury* not only indicates essence, but is also intricately intertwined with the locally held belief that Tatar is the language of intimacy and solidarity and Russian the external, authoritative voice of potential brutality. Despite the fact *iman nury* is central to how Tatar-speakers parse the world as they move through it, Russian-speakers in Kazan seem entirely ignorant of its existence. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about *iman nury* is that, with some effort, a person can learn to perceive it, after which *iman nury* becomes a tangible and obligatory part of how the world is ordered. After spending three months in Kazan and becoming somewhat conversant with Tatar speech practices, I began to be able to identify Tatar-speakers by the look on their faces. In other words, I could see *iman nury*.

Early in the group interviews with bilingual urban Tatar teenagers at Kazan’s Lab School, I asked them what languages they use with whom. They responded that they use Tatar or Tatar and Russian with their parents.⁶⁰ With people outside their homes, they said, it depended. Choosing shopping as the sphere of activity in which they most often needed to de-

cide what language to use with strangers, they told me, if a merchant spoke Tatar, that was the language they would speak. The question of language choice came down to trying to discern a person's nationality based upon visible markers.



Figure 6.4. *Iman nury*, photo courtesy of Liliya Karimova

The teenagers explained that figuring out who was Tatar was much easier in stores and indoor markets, where the clerks wear nametags, than at outdoor markets where they do not. "If there is a Tatar name written on the clerk's nametag, then it is a safe bet that she speaks Tatar," one teenager explained. Another added, "But, it happens that a person has a Tatar first and last name and doesn't know a word of Tatar."

What these teenagers mean by a “Tatar name” is a Muslim one. However, in addition to Muslim Tatars, there are Christian Tatars or *Käräshennär*—less than 1% of Tatarstan Tatars according to the 2002 Russian census, though their numbers are thought to be much higher. *Käräshennär* were converted under tsarist rule and are supposed to have names indistinguishable from the “Russian” names of other Orthodox Christians, though they often don’t.⁶¹ One can never be entirely sure who’s Tatar. Neither phenotype nor clothing nor markers of “authentic” identity like names provide absolutely reliable information. For example, once I asked a merchant with a “Russian” name printed on her badge if she were Tatar and she replied, “Yes, I am a Muslim.” I also encountered merchants with Muslim names who could or would not speak Tatar with me.

The second indicator of Tatariness named by bilingual adolescents was something harder to read than a nametag. They said, “Tatars have a different look about them. Their eyes are different. Their gaze is somehow different.” I started asking adults about this gaze and they informed me that it was *iman nury* or the light of faith. Although the devout Sveta *apa* considers that all religious people, no matter what their faith, possess *iman nury*, everyone else I spoke to asserted that it was a Muslim quality. For example, Dilbara had this to say of my fiancé, a Turk from Turkey:

- D. **As soon as I saw him, I knew he wasn’t from Germany or a country like that. I knew...I don’t know how to say it in Russian...**
 me **Say it in Tatar and I will try to understand.**

Dilbara then invoked the wisdom of Feyzie *apa*, an elderly aunt living in the US. Because Feyzie *apa* never lived under Soviet rule, Dilbara and her family consider her an authority on authentic Tatariness.

- D. **Feyzie *apa* says, in the faces of Muslims there is a light.**
 me *I understand.*
 D. **So when I saw him I knew that he was from a Turkish country, or maybe an Arab, from that world... It comes from speaking Tatar. Russians don’t have that light.**
 me *Does this light come to a person through Tatar language?*
 D. **Yes. If you keep on speaking Tatar, you will have that light too.**

[Russian in bold and Tatar in italics]

Thus, the act of speaking Tatar is thought to affect one's internal disposition in a way that brings the speaker closer to Islam. Interesting in this exchange is Dilbara's insistence that speaking Tatar is a Muslim practice and her presupposition that Muslims—for she glosses all Turks and Arabs as Muslim—speak Tatar. Indeed, the assumption not only that Muslim and Tatar are synonymous terms, but that all Muslims speak Tatar is common among Kazan Tatars. For example, Liutsia *xanym*, the only person I met who insisted she could differentiate Tatars from Russians without fail, responded when I asked her how she picked out Tatars, "I can always tell a Muslim." This reproduces the perceived iconic relation between Islam and Tatars. For when I asked Liutsia *xanym* about *Käräshennär*, she asserted that they were Russians. But, not all Muslims, especially at the bazaar where Liutsia *xanym* says she tries to speak as much Tatar as possible, are Tatars. Many merchants are Uzbek, Kyrgyz, or Azeri, that is, speakers of other Turkic languages, but some are also Tajiks, who speak an Indo-European language closely related to Farsi. Even though Liutsia *xanym* habitually expresses disdain for Islam, she constructs the boundary between Tatars and Russians as one of Muslims and non-Muslims.

In the case of my fiancé, however, religious background coincided with linguistic ability. Not only was he nominally a Muslim, but he also spoke standard Tatar. Therefore, despite the fact that Dilbara's comment revealed her provincial perspective regarding the kinds of people who inhabit the earth, the particular case did bear out her observation. What may have been more salient, however, in regards to how she perceived my fiancé was his absolute ignorance of Russian. Consequently, in the estimation of Dilbara and other bilingual Tatars, he was cut off from the world ideologized as external to intimate relations—where the light of faith can be extinguished.

Another way Tatars refer to the gaze they perceive to differentiate them from potentially inimical others is as *achyk bet* or open countenance. Lacking the religious implications of *iman nury*, an *achyk bet* consists of a forehead relaxed from a frown, a mouth modestly closed with its corners slightly upturned, a gaze firmly connected to the people in one's immediate vicinity, and most importantly a constant warm, loving smile emanating from the eyes. Although maintaining an open countenance can be learned and performed at will, it is nonetheless considered central to being Tatar.

The Tatar lexical term *achyk* denoting "open" also means "light," as in English understandings of a light, airy room. As such, *achyk* gets semantically paired with the term *karangy* or dark, etymologically derived from

the word for black, *kara*. *Karangylyk*—the abstract noun meaning “darkness”—refers to a lack of openness, a state of being closed off to the needs of other people. This is part of a local racial ideology in which lightness and darkness are binary opposites, not at the surface level of phenotype, but deep in one’s emotional constitution.

Tatars strive towards lightness and openness, which is why they wear white headscarves, in contradistinction to the black ones worn by Russians and some other Muslims. Indeed, very white headscarves are a subject of great admiration among Tatars. Likewise, if a Tatar man wears a crisp, white shirt, women’s estimation of his attractiveness immediately swells. Tatars’ desire for light and openness is reflected not only in clothing, but also in preferences for interior décor.

Astonishingly, Tatar-speakers’ preference for lightness is complemented by an attraction to darkness among Kazan’s Russian-speakers. This attraction reveals itself, *inter alia*, in the places Russian-speakers’ like to go for entertainment. One afternoon in December 1999 a Russian-identified schoolteacher of English language, who inherited her Tatar surname from her grandfather, took me to her favorite café. The café was in a dark basement below street level, decorated to look like a craggy cave with stalactites and stalagmites plastered onto its rounded walls. The lighting there was so low that it was difficult to make out our drinks standing on the table between us. On a later occasion, I took two female Tatar university students there. The Tatar students felt extremely ill at ease in the dimly lit café, hunching their shoulders and kept their eyes fixed on my face, as if it were dangerous to look around. They humored me in my desire to go there because I was their elder and a foreigner, but they couldn’t wait to get out of the darkness and back into the open air, where they finally felt enough at ease to admit their discomfort. The places they liked to go were brightly lit with white walls and white curtains framing big windows that look out onto the street. When I asked the Russian-identified teacher what she thought of the most popular of these, the House of Tea, she said she didn’t like it. The bright openness of the House of Tea’s interior made her feel as if she didn’t have any privacy. The teacher’s taste recalls the aesthetics of Soviet-period restaurants and the newly constructed Pyramid, dimly lit with heavily curtained windows so people from the street can’t see what goes on inside.⁶²

Differences in Tatar and Russian tastes in restaurant décor are echoed in their places of worship and homes. As a rule, Tatar mosques have high domed ceilings and numerous windows. They are brightly lit by natural light and chandeliers. Orthodox churches, by contrast, tend to be dark,



Figure 6.5. Kazan's House of Tea (no flash)



Figure 6.6. Inside St. Basil's Cathedral, Moscow (with flash)

largely windowless, and lit mostly by burning candles. Tatars express a physical aversion to these candles, saying the candles smell of death and venture that they are made from tallow rendered from pork fat, which is *haram* or forbidden, in Islam. This parallel extends into the home. Russian-speakers often wallpaper their apartments in somber tones. Their

furniture, bed coverings, rugs and other decorations are usually dark, even drab in color. A lot of Tatar-speaking Tatars live in drab places as well, but many with money decorate their apartments with white walls, crystal chandeliers, and light-colored carpets. Moreover, even when Tatars' apartments are drab, they like to cover tables, samovars, and the pillows on beds with delicate white lace coverlets. While Russians wear slippers at home to keep their feet warm and the dirt from the street from penetrating beyond the threshold, in the homes of some Tatars with strong village ties, people walk around in socks. One teenage girl I talked to about this bragged that she only wears white socks at home, which she considers a testament to how clean her house is kept.



Figure 6.7. A Tatar Apartment in the Old Tatar Quarter, Kazan

Surrounded by Russians

Some Tatars told me that *achyklyk* [lightness] and *karangylyk* [darkness] not only demarcate ethnically bounded physical space, but behavioral interactions as well. In November 2000 I was taken unannounced to visit a friend's brother. It was a Saturday and the brother was away in the village. His wife Fuliya, a daycare worker and new mother, welcomed

us and told us to sit in the living room while she made “tea.” After about 20 minutes, she called us into the kitchen and served us a feast of *plov*, homemade jams, cakes, and black tea.⁶³ After we ate, my friend went into another room to make some telephone calls, and I had ample opportunity to talk to his sister-in-law. This was my first return visit to Kazan since learning to speak Tatar fluently. Because I was a new acquaintance and spoke to her brother-in-law only in Tatar, Fuliya accepted me as a Tatar-speaker.

At one point during our conversation, the doorbell to the apartment rang and she excused herself to answer it. When Fuliya came back, she explained to me in Russian that the neighbor wanted to know if she and her husband still needed to be driven to their village in order to fetch a piece of furniture. I asked if the neighbor were Russian, pointing out that she had switched languages. Switching back to Tatar, Fuliya responded that the neighbor was indeed Russian. There were Russians living in the apartments on either side of theirs. The one she had just talked to was not nice, while the one on the other side was okay. She added that they visit with each other, but not in the real way. Fuliya said that everywhere in the building she and her family were surrounded by Russians. There was only one Tatar family, living below, “But, they are like Russians.” When I asked how, Fulya told me they were *karangy*, like Russians, while Tatars are usually *achyk*. She elucidated, “They have constant scandals and wars. The family can’t get along because they don’t give anything to each other.” Her statement implies that openness implies generosity, while darkness is associated with selfishness.

Fuliya’s opinions represent those of someone who maintains strong connections to village life—as evidenced by the fact that she cooks with herbs and dairy products from her home village—while living in an urban environment. Unlike most Tatars of village origin with whom I spent time in Kazan, Fuliya is not an intellectual. Daycare workers receive one or two years of education beyond high school. The only reading material I saw in her house was the Tatar women’s magazine *Söyembike*, which, she said, she doesn’t have time to read. Moreover, in contrast to most Tatars living in Kazan, her Russian wasn’t fluent. Fuliya’s newness to the city and relative lack of sophistication in dealing with outsiders, by contrast to the other Tatars I knew, suggests what they also endure, but do not divulge. Fuliya is a member of an enclave, a village Tatar in Kazan who feels surrounded by an urban Russian sea. Her perception of that sea’s *karangylyk*, as opposed to the *achyklyk* of Tatar-speaking society, reveals the existence of an ideology of racial difference based on structures of

feeling that inverts race-based notions of blackness dating from the Soviet period.

Conclusions

This chapter explores the particularities of two non-comparable racial ideologies operating in Tatarstan. The first is an ideology broadly circulating in Russia, based on a belief in immutable essence in the blood according to nationality that has external manifestations in language and “black” or “Asian” phenotypes. This ideology has increasingly deleterious effects as rates of race-based violence escalate in the post-Soviet period. Moreover, this ideology essentializes Tatars as the “Mongol-Tatars” who “enslaved” Russia during 300 years of the Golden Horde’s rule. In an effort to avoid this stigma, Tatars cast themselves as “European indigenes,” who likewise suffered at the Golden Horde’s hands.

In contradistinction to other parts of the former Soviet Union, people in Tatarstan do not necessarily rely on phenotype as an identity marker. Historically high rates of intermarriage have made it difficult to tell who is Russian and who is not. Indeed, Kazan Russians, even those who dislike Tatars, don’t mind resembling them. As a result, Kazanians depend upon markers they are not always able to read accurately to attempt to guess strangers’ linguistic competencies, important because approaching people in positions of power—shop and post office clerks, bank tellers, and so on—requires being able to create personalized connections to ensure that transactions have felicitous outcomes.

At the same time, a second racial ideology is in circulation. This ideology purports that practice can alter essence. Thus, according to Tatar-speakers, speaking the Tatar language, radiating *iman nury* and maintaining *achyk bet*, striving towards *achyklyk* [openness, lightness], cleanliness, and peace differentiates people from the *karangylyk* [darkness] of scandals and wars. This ideology is reflected not only in language, but also in dress, places of worship, home décor and eating establishment preferences. Just as Tatar-speakers strive for lightness in these things, Russian-speakers are drawn to darkness. What both ideologies have in common is that the person in the subject position perceives him- or herself as white/light, while the Other is black/dark.

These differences became apparent as a direct result of Tatarstan’s sovereignty movement, since knowing who speaks Tatar only began to matter once people started using the language in previously undomesticated domains. While guessing who speaks which language has become a

less burning question since Putin asserted Russia's authority over Tatarstan in 2000, Tatars' feelings of being surrounded by potential enemies have only grown stronger since then. If sovereignty's birth catalyzed the process of divergence among the worldviews held by Tatarstan residents, its demise solidified the differences in the discursive worlds people there inhabit.

The next chapter continues to explore the question of how Tatars perceive essential difference by examining the circulation and meanings of the song genre *mong*. Focusing on *mong* as a discursive locale for the concentration of nationalist sentiment and as a practice that reproduces that sentiment, it demonstrates that *mong* is both considered essential to being Tatar and something that allows Tatars to depart from the everyday practices that require them to display optimism and *achyk bet*.

Notes

- 1 Dominguez (1986); Urciuoli (1991, 1996); Williams 1989.
- 2 Thus, scholars regularly review the racial taxonomy created by 18th-century Swedish biologist Carl Linnaeus or 19th-century anthropologists' work on cranial types.
- 3 Feinstein (2000).
- 4 Lemon (2002b).
- 5 See a 2002 discussion in *Slavic Review* 61(1) with regards to this matter.
- 6 See Hirsch (2002); Lemon (1995, 1996, 1998, 2000b, 2002b); and Weitz (2002).
- 7 Certainly, the link between language and race is not confined to the post-Soviet context. See Morgan (2002) and Urciuoli (1991, 1996) for starters.
- 8 Open Society Justice Initiative. 2006. *Ethnic Profiling in the Moscow Metro*.
- 9 See Lemon (2000b). Passport regime enforcement began in the 1990s as a result of bombings in Moscow that were blamed on people from the Caucasus region.
- 10 Politkovskaia (2003). See also Lemon (2000a) on the Russian understanding of *kavkavskij natsional'nost'*.
- 11 Open Society Justice Institute (2006).
- 12 See <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/05/4910af6f-9da3-439c-b2b1-98cae6a24c87.html>.
- 13 See <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/paperchase/2009/02/russia-hate-crimes-up-slightly-in-2008.php> and <http://xeno.sova-center.ru/>.
- 14 American Association of Physical Anthropologists Statement on Biological Aspects of Race. 1996. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, Vol. 101: 569-570.
- 15 See Wolpoff and Caspari (1997); Goodman (2005); and Lewontin (2005), for example.
- 16 Hirschfeld (1996).
- 17 Titova (1999).
- 18 Busygin, Zorin, and Stolyarova (1991).
- 19 Interview with Guzel Stolyarova, 20 November 1999.
- 20 Lemon (1996, 2000a).

- 21 This is what English anthropologist Caroline Humphrey (2002: 35) calls “the pervasive residue of the Soviet tendency to ignore difference in the subject peoples for the sake of commonality,” that is, to encompass other people and assume they are the same or ‘benignly overlook’ their differences.
- 22 Pohl (1999).
- 23 See Wertheim (2003).
- 24 Zorin, V. Iu. et al. (2004).
- 25 Wertheim (2003).
- 26 For information on Bashkortostan sovereignty, see Graney (1999a, 1999b) and Walker (2003).
- 27 Kalmyks are considered Asian in Soviet ethnography.
- 28 See Silverstein (1996b) for a theorization of orders of awareness, which explores the cognitive mechanics whereby people’s awareness of certain phenomena can shift.
- 29 Ponomarev (1966).
- 30 Tatar is already a plural in Mongolian.
- 31 Uli Schamiloglu, personal communication.
- 32 Schamiloglu (2000).
- 33 In Russian vernacular, to do something like “white people” connotes having adequate resources to not be overextended. Once when I was riding in a car with Russian friends in St. Petersburg and we had ample room for everyone, one of my friends commented that we were traveling “like white people.”
- 34 Pesmen (2000a).
- 35 Silverstein (1996b) discusses other situations in which people hold two competing ideologies simultaneously.
- 36 Wipper (1947[1922]).
- 37 Valerie Kivelson, personal communication, with regards to the *lubok* paintings.
- 38 And in Russian: from *Ivan Grozny*, part I (1944)
*Kazan’ Moskva družbu rvět. Soyuz Moskovoj gōnchaet. V Moskvu vojnoj idēt...
 Kazan’—bol’shoi. Moskva—malenkii.
 Moskva gonchilsia.
 Nash velikii khan podarok poslai.
 Riustskii tsar—pōzor ne imei.
 Riustskii tsar—sam sebia gōnchai.*
 Grammatically correct, this text would read: *Kazan’s Moskovoj družbu rvět. Soyuz s Moskovoj konchaet. Na Moskvu vojnoj idēt. Kazan’—bol’shoi. Moskva—malenkii. Moskva konchilsia. Nash velikii khan podarok poslai. Russkii tsar’—pozor ne imei. Russkii tsar’—sam sebia konchai.* For the original script, see Eisenstein (1964).
- 39 Nichols (2003: 186, 211).
- 40 Akchurin et al. (2006).
- 41 To this day “bride capture” frequently masks elopement in cases when potential marriage partners lack the wealth needed for traditional marriage ceremonies. See Bringa (1995) for the same practice among Bosnians.
- 42 See Uehling (2004) for the effects of this perceived status on Crimean Tatars. Europe’s borders have moved significantly eastward since Moscow conquered Kazan in the 16th century. See Seegel (2006).
- 43 Even so, Tatar-speakers are not always cognizant of whether they are speaking Tatar or Russian. In her work, sociolinguist Suzanne Wertheim calls attention to “Tatar on-

- stage” style, which, she observes, differs from the everyday codeswitching that arises from a non-awareness of language (Wertheim 2003, 2006). Wertheim’s observation is illustrated by the words of a highly placed Tatarstan government official, who in 1999 informed me, “We speak in Tatar and write in Russian,” even though, at the time, Russian was the dominant language of spoken government business. Since Putin suspended Tatarstan sovereignty, however, government officials, including the one quoted here, speak more Tatar at work.
- 44 The emotional, though not the linguistic, aspect of this phenomenon bears a resemblance to Raymond Williams’ (1977) elusive description of “structures of feeling,” taken from E.P. Thompson’s (1963) work on the English working class.
 - 45 Xujieäxmätov (1998), *inter alii*. Although the belief that essence become fixed through practice recalls Gilroy’s (1987) ethnic absolutism, it differs significantly in that it represents a counter-hegemonic discourse.
 - 46 Schimmel (1992) describes the other four pillars, providing a nice overview of the basic tenets of Islam.
 - 47 Lysenko (1948).
 - 48 See Fitzpatrick (1999) and Zinoviev (1985), *inter alia*.
 - 49 See Urciouli (1991, 1996).
 - 50 The temptation may be great to envision this within a Foucauldian paradigm (1995). Unfortunately, his paradigm can’t account for why anyone would have *wanted* to keep speaking Tatar, given all of the disciplinary measures speaking it could have visited upon a person.
 - 51 Wertheim (2003).
 - 52 See Verdery (1996) for a similar situation in Transylvania and Humphrey (2002) for more on post-Soviet radical uncertainty.
 - 53 “New Russian” was a term applied to people who profited economically from the collapse of the Soviet Union’s socialist system. See Humphrey (2002) for more on New Russians as a social category.
 - 54 For an elucidation of heteroglossy see Bakhtin (1981). For more on Soviet-style command economies, see Verdery (1996).
 - 55 This division between subordinate and dominant languages is similar to what Woolard (1989) found for Catalan among its speakers.
 - 56 Solidarity as in Brown and Gilman’s (1960) and Woolard’s (1989) analyses of other contexts. See Urciouli (1991, 1996) for a similar situation among a community of New York Puerto Ricans.
 - 57 My thanks to Larry Hirschfeld for his help in developing the methodology for this experiment.
 - 58 Lemon (2000a) describes the importance of lightness and darkness as racial features in Moscow.
 - 59 Hirschfeld (1996, 1997). See also Bronson and Merryman (2009) on US children’s sensitivity to race.
 - 60 This was corroborated by the written responses they provided to a matched guise test I conducted with them.
 - 61 Paul Werth (2000) notes that before the 1917 revolution some 10% of Tatars were *Käräshen*, while Fagan (2002) states that 8% of Tatars in Tatarstan are Orthodox. *Käräshennär* were a separate census category in the 1920s and again during the 2002 all-Russian census. In 2002 some Muslim Tatars objected to the reintroduction of the

category *Käräshen* as an attempt to lessen the credibility of Tatar calls for pluralism in the Russian Federation by artificially diminishing their numbers.

- 62 Soviet restaurants' lack of transparency can be metaphorically extended to the non-correspondence between the dishes listed on menus and their cost and what is served. See Dovlatov (1993) for some black humor on dining in Soviet restaurants. In the post-Soviet period, Russified Kazanians evince adoration for McDonalds, while Tatar-speakers tend to consider the food to be unhealthy.
- 63 *Plov* is a dish considered to be Uzbek, but in practice it has become pan-Soviet. Some Kazan Russians once served it to me for Easter dinner. It consists of pieces of meat, carrots, raisins, and spices cooked with rice.

CHAPTER 7

***MONG* AND THE NATIONAL REPRODUCTION OF COLLECTIVE SORROW**

“Do you see this duck? It is made out of fine filigree gold. It represents a Tatar myth about the creation of the world. The duck pulled the islands that make up the earth out of the sea and that’s how the world came into existence.”

Güzel, Tour guide at the Tatarstan National Museum, November 2000

The myth about the duck pulling the earth out of the sea may be understood as a metaphor for how a significant number of Tatar-speakers see their position as inhabitants of the Russian Federation. Many Tatars say they feel surrounded by an undifferentiated sea of Russians—who speak a language Tatars don’t feel comfortable speaking; operate according to social rules incomprehensible and often offensive to them; and are emotionally constructed in ways that simply do not make sense.



Figure 7.1. Woman’s jewelry
12th-century, Bolgar.
Found near Mokryie Kurnali Village

What does make sense, by contrast, to Tatar-speakers is something they call *mong*. *Mong* is a generalized feeling of grief-sorrow, a type of melancholy song, the sorrowful melodies that animate the melancholy songs, the sentiment singers singing those songs tap into and transmit, the emotion audience members experience while listening to them, and a topic of ideo-

logical talk.¹ *Mong* taps into, produces, and reproduces a feeling that unites Tatar-speakers as a nation of people who have suffered collectively. It successfully generates a unifying feeling of collective suffering because individuals are encouraged to understand *mong* in diverse ways. Flexibility in interpreting *mong*'s meanings allows Tatars to experience a feeling of collective inclusiveness even while expressing their own individuality. *Mong* creates a continuous emotional connectedness that serves to separate Tatars ideologically from people they perceive as comprising an undifferentiated "Russian sea."

Always sung in a minor key and often accompanied by accordion music, mongful songs are marked by long-held, deeply resonant notes carried best by strong, clear, versatile voices (sometimes with professional operatic training) that sonorously sound the songs' sad lyrics. Typical *mong* lyrics concern feelings of sorrow and loss expressed metaphorically through an emotional description of a scene from nature. Their lack of specificity connotes that they belong to the nation as a whole, as opposed to individuals. In being laden with an untranslatable mournful nostalgia, *mong* bears a similarity to the Portuguese musical genre *fado*. And while *mong*'s musical qualities differ profoundly from those of American blues, young Tatars aware of parallels between US and Soviet history sometimes refer to *mong* as "the Tatar blues."²

Mongly jyrlar—mongful songs—are highly conservative in form, even though understandings of *mong*'s meanings vary widely. *Mong* is still most frequently produced when groups of people sit around a table drinking tea and singing. Despite *mong*'s role as an everyperson's practice, like other surviving Soviet folk arts, its songs have been fixed as texts in books, professionalized by conservatory-trained artists, and commodified as purchasable recordings. While Tatar-speakers considered my research on Kazan's school system a well-intended acknowledgement of their efforts to create social equity, their eyes widened with delighted surprise when I started asking questions about *mong* and they said I was really onto something important. Although singing *mongly jyrlar* is losing popularity among urban youth living at a remove from the rhythms of village life, it nevertheless remains part of the habitual activities of their city-living parents and those relatives who remain in the villages. Moreover, even young urban Tatar-speakers feel that *mong* is a core feature of Tatar identity.

Perhaps *mong*'s most significant quality is that it is generally understood to be something Russians do not have nor care to learn about. Russian indifference to *mong* mirrors other relationships between Tatars and

Russians, colonial in that Tatars know all about things Russian, while Russians are largely unaware of any but the most superficial aspects of Tatar culture. Tatar-speakers habitually say that Russians do not have a word equivalent to *mong* and therefore they cannot understand what it means. Though *mong* is not part of Tatar culture Tatars feel they can explain while speaking Russian, the word is nevertheless rendered in Russian most frequently as “melody,” and occasionally as “nostalgia.” However, recognizing *mong* does not require knowledge of Tatar, just curiosity about its existence.³ Thus, saying that Russians have no word for *mong* in actuality glosses Russian indifference to *mong* and the insult to Tatar cultural values that that indifference implies.

The first time I heard the word *mong* was in September 1999. I had just been introduced to the Tatar class of eleventh-graders at the Lab School by their head teacher, Hayat *apa*. After they realized that I spoke very little Tatar, they started speaking in Russian. We talked about the Tatar language and they began to explain to me how rich and unique it is. One girl exclaimed, her eyes widening, “Tatar has the word *mong*.” When I asked what *mong* was, they told me, as Tatar-speakers did every time the word came up in a Russian conversation, that *mong* cannot be translated. “*Mong*,” another girl declared, wonder lighting up her eyes, “is everything. Ask our teacher and she can tell you all about it.”

While *mong* is both the song and the feeling the song evokes in singers and listeners, it is also a vehicle for reproducing particularly Tatar feelings about the fate of “the nation.” To be considered knowledgeable about and therefore fluent in *mong*, a person must be able to manipulate all three of its modes—channeling *mong* as an emotion, singing *mongful* songs, and talking about *mong*’s meaning. Not everyone possesses all three abilities in equal measure.

My exploration of *mong* relies upon formal taped interviews, supplemented by ethnographic observations, written sources, and informal conversations. I conducted formal interviews with Sveta *apa*, a talented singer and authority on *mong*, Sveta *apa*’s niece, Hayat *apa*, and her friend, Venera *apa*—both women skillful in producing the affect of *mong* and discourse about it, two teenage girls through whom the feeling of *mong* flows, but who neither sing nor talk about *mong* eloquently, and four Tatar men in their 20s and 30s who call themselves *millätchelär* or nationalists. Because I positioned myself as a married woman while doing research, I have more detailed information about *mong* from other women. However, *mong* is not gendered—neither in its affect, ideology, character as a folk art, nor as a professional music genre.

How *mong* is superficially defined and deeply experienced serves to unite Tatar-speakers on an emotional level. That is, the flexible interpretation of an experience largely inflexible in form by individuals who all consider themselves members of the same nation reinforces their sense of collective belonging. All Tatar-speakers define *mong* identically at a superficial level. However, deeper probing reveals that how Tatars variously comprehend *mong* highlights the diversity of their social positions and individual perspectives in relation to their nation and the world. Tatars first define *mong* as grief-sorrow or *kaygyi xäsrät*—the word's dictionary definition.⁴ When asked to elucidate—What is *mong*? Who has it? Where does it come from? What relation does it have to *iman* or religious faith?—the people responding, who all circulate through interconnected Tatar-speaking urban social networks, provided diverse answers. This phenomenon presents an important counterexample to Benedict Anderson's near-axiomatic definition of how nationalism is supposed to be experienced.

Tatar Emotions

An inflexible form of expression for collective mourning, *mong* is both definitive of Tatar national ideologies and part of their reproduction. It represents both an intensification of everyday emotional expression and a departure from conventional norms. Despite its perceived centrality to a unified Tatar experience, *mong* stands apart from other varieties of Tatar verbal expression—including other song genres—by not accommodating innovation or variation.

Emotions vary from one culture to another.⁵ Unlike Russians, Tatar-speakers consider engaging in lament inappropriate reactions to grief and other emotionally difficult moments. Even when speaking Russian, Tatars attempt to refrain from giving in to negative emotions like anger and unrestrained sorrow, especially when those emotions manifest themselves in shouting and shedding tears. Tatars regularly remind themselves of the need to negotiate by maintaining certain affective practices. Just as Tatar-speakers discourage expressing negativity, so they encourage the communication of positive emotions. They convey the latter through the racialized gaze of *iman nury*, frequent declarations of fondness and love for one another, and a didactic metadiscourse that ideologizes expressing positive feelings as integral to how Tatars as a nation should behave.

Mong helps Tatars to maintain calm in a tumultuous surroundings. It provides them release by presenting an opportunity to vent sorrow in an

acceptable manner. While *mong* emerges from the same cultural system of emotional openness as *iman nury* and *achyk bet*, its performance is framed by particular moments set off from everyday interactions.⁶ In contrast to their habitual behavior, when Tatars sing and listen to mongful songs, their gazes retreat from those of the people surrounding them, as they focus inward on their own personal sorrows, and they permit tears to form in the corners of their eyes. Despite their inwardly focused gazes, participants in the rituals that reproduce *mong* are physically completely integrated into the collective as they let the “ancient, unchanging melodies” flow through them.

Mong as Practice

This section describes the rituals that produce and reproduce *mong* and demonstrates how tapping into *mong* fortifies feelings of national suffering. Both settings portrayed here emerged as a result of the national fluorescence that followed the Soviet Union’s collapse. The first setting is a Turkic cultural cruise and the second a Tatar classroom in the academically competitive Lab School.

Singing the Nation’s Sorrow

As a research site, the Turkic cultural cruise was comparable to Mark Twain’s novel *Huckleberry Finn*. Just as social relations between Huck and Jim were based on parity as long as they floated down the Mississippi River, the people on the Turkic cruise were isolated from the most severe external social inequities. The society on board the cruise ship provided an environment in which Tatars could be free to be Tatar without having to worry about offending Russians. Referred to as a mini-*hadj*, and embarked upon repeatedly like the *hadj*’s smaller stages, the cruise is an annual cultural event for constructing and reinforcing a not necessarily Muslim, post-Soviet Tatar identity.

The small ship disembarks from Ufa and sails along the Belyi and Volga Rivers to Kazan and back over the course of a week, stopping at sites of significance to Tatar culture along the way. Musicians stage nightly concerts, after which the cruise’s organizers hold exclusive midnight banquets in the dining room while everyone else attends inclusive Tatar discotheques and spontaneous musical performances on deck. Although a few passengers did not speak Tatar, those of us who did, for

once, didn't have to calculate whether or not conversing in that language was appropriate. The repeated creation of this cultural space has had an enduring effect its participants, who plan and save throughout the year in order to take the cruise again and thus renew the feelings of joy and belonging they experience during it. The cruise encourages people to engage in what they feel to be the most Tatar kinds of relations and provides them a forum to talk about, create, and experience *mong*. Due to the coincidence of being able to take pleasure in being Tatar and to speak Tatar freely and uninterruptedly, the cruise reinforces Tatars' generally held belief that culture resides in language.

On board the cruise I took in July 2000 was the much-loved Tatar singer Färidä Kudasheva, a small woman with a benevolent gaze, auburn hair, and the high cheekbones and round cheeks characteristic of Eurasian Turks. One evening after dinner Färidä *apa* gave a concert in celebration of her 80th birthday.⁷ When she began to sing, instead of smiling and looking each other in the eyes as they had during performances at previous concerts, the audience members tightly packed together in the ship's stuffy hold sat somberly without moving. Hints of tears glinted in their eyes. Their gazes were still, uncharacteristically disconnected from the present moment. The songs Färidä *apa* sang were slow in tempo and minor in key. A mournful accordion accompanied her voice. About halfway through her performance, Färidä *apa* stopped singing and explained that she had decided to sing only *mongly jyrlar* that evening. After another hour, the concert ended. The Master of Ceremonies came on stage and thanked Färidä *apa* profusely for her performance. Then, people from the audience started presenting the singer with gifts. Before placing their gifts in her hands, smiling, their gazes once again connected to the people in their immediate surroundings, each person congratulated Färidä *apa* on the occasion of her 80th birthday and thanked her for the concert. She received each gift with a kiss or an embrace.

One middle-aged woman, who said that she had grown up in Sverdlovsk (now Yekaterinburg) among Russians, asked permission to make her presentation in Russian.⁸ After implying that she didn't know Tatar well enough to speak it, the woman talked about the lyrics to Färidä *apa*'s songs. She said they reminded her of her childhood and how her *äbi*—Tatar for “grandmother”—used to listen to Färidä *apa*'s music.⁹ She explained that, after taking the cruise three times, she had come to understand the significance [*znachenie*] of the songs' words. Several other audience members made similar statements regarding the memories that Färidä *apa*'s songs had conjured. All mentioned that hearing Färidä *apa*

sing brought back recollections of listening to her songs on the radio as children in the company of now-dead relatives. Their speeches often nostalgically referred to the natal villages in which most no longer lived. For those people, it seemed, the cruise provided an opportunity to recreate village social relations.

On another occasion, which I videotaped, the eleventh grade class at the Lab School arranged a tea-drinking session for my fiancé and me. One of their teachers, Sveta *apa*, hosted the event and had the teenage students sing for us.¹⁰ At her request, they happily sang the unofficial Tatar national anthem, *Tugan tel* [Native Tongue], based upon the best-known work by pre-revolutionary Tatar poet Gabdullah Tukay. Then, Sveta *apa* asked the pupils to sing a mongful song for us. The pupils protested that they did not know any mongful songs. Sveta *apa* scolded them, saying, “You need to learn mongful songs. Otherwise, who will teach this *mong* to your children? You know,” she continued, “when I have difficult moments, I sing.” Then, she began to sing alone. She chose the ancient song *Täftiläü*, in which, she informed me on a later occasion, “all the *mong* of the Tatar people, all its past, all its grief-sorrow and the painful existence that has accumulated through the centuries has been placed.” As she sang, the smiles dropped off the pupils’ faces. Their eyes got misty and their expressions became mournful and distant. The only people somewhat unaffected by the song were the class’ sole boyfriend-girlfriend couple, who were flirting with each other. But, by the end of the song’s three verses even the girlfriend had developed a removed gaze.

<u>Täftiläü</u> Ah, my sacred mongly saz, You played such a short time? You are broken, my flame is snuffed, We are separated in the end. Flying around the edge of the world The bird of my heart was pinched. Even if God created happiness on earth, It would still be alien to me.	<u>Täftiläü</u> Äy, mökadäs mongly sazým, Uynadyng sin nik bik az? Sin synasyng, min sünämen, Aerylabyz axrysy. Ochty dön’ya chitlerennän Tarsynyp küngelem koshy. Shat yaratsa la jihanga, Yat yaratkan Rabbysy.
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Figure 7.2. Lyrics to *Täftiläü*

The teenagers present at this event were primarily urban-dwelling. However, they frequently “returned” to their parents’ villages. This means that, unlike their Tatar teachers, who grew up in villages and only started speaking Russian once they migrated to Kazan to go to university, they

are both physically and culturally distanced from *mong* as a habitual practice. However, through even relatively infrequent experiences of *mong*, these children feel *mong* and exist, at least intermittently, in a discursive world shaped in part by *mong*'s grief-sorrow.

***Mong* as Ideology**

In addition to being a practice, *mong* is an explicit ideology, or rather a set of related ideologies, about what it means to be Tatar in post-Soviet Russia. While the Tatarstan government has no official stance on *mong*, it is considered an integral part of Tatar identity. Thus, *mong* receives government support insofar as it comprises a national cultural activity. For example, the Tatarstan government-run radio station employed singers of *mong* and promoted their careers, before it was privatized in 2005. Government-funded publishers print books on *mong* and government-controlled newspapers print articles about it, like the one cited below.

Orthodox Interpretations

The experiences of *mong* the passengers on the Turkic cultural cruise described are not unique to them. A newspaper article entitled "*Mong* Enlivens the Soul," printed in the Tatarstan former Communist Party Organ newspaper *Vatanyrm Tatarstan*, illustrates this. The view of the article's author, named Matshin, adheres to the most orthodox interpretation of *mong*, as characterized by its dictionary definition:

Whether grieving or rejoicing, song does not abandon a person. The art of song provides a person with a lifelong companion. Everyone has been raised (*tärbiälänä*) in his or her lifetime with the songs s/he heard performed while lying in the cradle.¹¹ Song links the present with the future. Song, purifying our soul and fortifying our hopes, is a godlike force that enriches our spiritual strength.

Yes, our people is a nation given to the art of song from its very soul. At the nation's foundation lies a thousand years of *mong*. History itself made a gift of *mong*. Our people's pride and vigilance are becoming fortified: in fire our people do not burn, in water they do not sink—they conquer the enemy of the nation. Thus, those summoned to death sing as they come. They are born with song. Through song they come to know the world! In short, in the existence of *mong* is the nation's entire soul, its people, and its history.¹²

Even though other varieties of Tatar music, including folk songs—called *xalyk jyrlary*—exist, Matshin claims that *mong* is the fundamental Tatar

musical genre because it is central both to everyday existence and to life's major events. Moreover, like many people I spoke to, he claims that *mong* has been central to reproducing the Tatar nation as a collective for a thousand years, and, indeed, constitutes the nation's very essence. Matshin's proud nationalist tone does not seem to fundamentally differ from other Tatars' opinions regarding *mong*. Rather, writing for the Tatar press, Matshin does not expect any non-Tatars to "overhear" his words.¹³

Channeling *Mong*

Sveta *apa* likewise provides an orthodox view of *mong*, albeit crafted for a non-Tatar audience. Around 60 years of age at the time of our interview, Sveta *apa* is a respected singer and a *hadji*. Islam's most conservative forms prohibit musical performances, especially by women, since entertaining with music implies the provision of other forms of entertainment as well.¹⁴ However, Sveta *apa*, who has not only visited Mecca, but fasts during Ramadan and observes other Muslim prohibitions—like that against drinking spirits—sees no conflict between the teachings of Islam and singing.

Sveta *apa* once described *mong* to me in a way that seemed to embrace pre-Islamic Turkic beliefs according to which the supreme being is the Sky God, *Kük-Tängri*.¹⁵ Speaking more Russian to me than she did on any other occasion before or after, Sveta *apa* treated *mong* as if it were a supernatural force from on high.

"I sing and *mong* flows. From where I don't know." She gestured towards the sky.

"*Mong* can't be translated by a single word. It is melody and energy..."

"And nostalgia," I added. She nodded in acquiescence.

"You can't translate *mong* into American because America is made up of many different peoples. There cannot be a unifying *mong*."

When Sveta *apa* granted me a formal videotaped interview about *mong* in Tatar over a year later, in July 2001, she readied herself by combing her hair and applying lipstick. Then, she seated herself in front of the camera, placing a volume of mongful songs on the table next to her for reference. Referring to a book, even one published by the Soviet press, does not render Sveta *apa*'s knowledge of *mong* inauthentic, for being authentically Tatar doesn't entail rejecting Soviet-vetted cultural objects. Rather, Sveta *apa*'s use of a reference book indicates the generally acknowledged Tatar

respect for the printed word, as well as her special status as *ukugan keshe*—an educated person.

Sveta *apa* began the interview by asserting that *mong* is a quality Americans don't have, due to our diversity, and also something that does not exist in the English, German, French, or Arabic languages, and consequently—she implied—not in speakers of those languages. Moreover, she suggested, since *mong* is translated as “melody” in Russian, Russians don't understand its meaning either. She insisted that *mong* does not belong to individuals, but instead is an attribute of the nation:

Mong is the roads along which the Tatar people has passed. It is the whole history of the Tatar people's existence, its pain....It is the history of our entire existence passed down through the centuries from our ancient forefathers, our Bolgar forefathers. *Mong* is everything the people—broken and unbroken—has lived through.

Sveta *apa* thus understands *mong* to constitute the sum total of the Tatar nation's experience.

Mong belongs to the nation because it both resides in the people as a whole and, through its reproduction, recreates the collective. In Tatar villages today, as in Sveta *apa*'s accounts of her childhood, frequent back and forth visiting between households strengthens collectivist connections. Thus, when Sveta *apa* spoke of her parents singing, she described scenes in which several households had gathered together. *Mong* thus belongs neither exclusively to the private sphere—the domestic unit—nor entirely to the public sphere—mass media.¹⁶ Rather, *mong* exists in an interstitial space somewhere between private and public, since the unit that produces and reproduces it is constituted of a loosely bound and shifting community of relatives, neighbors, and co-nationals in whom *mong* is considered to reside. As Sveta *apa* explained:

Mong is an attribute of our people because song is in the entire people, not in separate individuals. The people survived because of *mong*. This *mong* has enabled the people to live and to work. *Mong* has given the people strength to live through difficult moments, even when conditions have been hard. During painfully tragic times, the people have somehow drawn strength from these songs, from *mong*. It has found an example by which to continue living. It has learned to understand the difference between right and wrong. That is, I think that song in general teaches a person, a Tatar person, *tärbiia*....

Despite the fact that *tärbiia* consists of innumerable sets of acquired appropriate behaviors, it is perceived as an absolute, something that people either do or do not have—an essential quality. And for Sveta *apa*, the

essentialness of *tärbiia* is tightly linked to *mong*. Indeed, she pointed out, “a *mongly* person cannot be uncultivated [*tärbiiasez*]. I think a *mongly* person cannot be uncultivated because his or her inner world is necessarily cultivated. S/he cannot speak a rude word.”

Because Sveta *apa* is among the most religious Tatar-speakers I know, I wanted to find out whether she thought there was a relationship between the existence of *mong* and Muslim faith or *iman*. Her response to my question was:

Undoubtedly. I am of that opinion. You can't expect anything from a person without faith. I think that *mong* and faith are the neighboring green roots of one tree. A person who has faith has a light in his or her eyes—it is like that in any people. No matter which religion that people considers good, if there is faith deep in the heart, the face will be pure and full of light.

Thus, *mong* and *iman nury*—the light of faith—are parallel phenomena. Echoing her previous statement to the effect that *mong* is a force that descends as a gift from on high, Sveta *apa* continued:

Mong comes from the heavens [*küktän*]. I think that God gave me *mong* as a gift. It is a very great gift. God gave me a voice, s/he gave the singing of songs, and s/he gave *mong*.¹⁷ It is not my possession. It comes from God. It is not something discovered by me. It was presented through my parents' hymns.¹⁸ My father has a voice.¹⁹ My father therefore sang very beautifully, very *mongfully* he sang. Maybe it is possible that my voice descended to me through my father's hymns. However, the hymns are a gift from God.

Sveta *apa*'s assertion that she received *mong* through the “hymns” her parents sang conveys how *mong* has been passed down from one generation to another, as well as how it is reproduced among people of the same generation. Singing *mongly jyrlar* transmits knowledge of the songs and how to sing them, while simultaneously producing the affect of national unity in shared suffering. Using the example of one of the most popular *mongly jyr*, Sveta *apa* explained why a song describing a dark forest is really about Tatar history. She said that the song *Kara Urman*—The Black Forest—speaks of

painful existence, the painful years, the pain our people endured from various other peoples....Agony, blackness [*karangylyk*]. Black times and painful times, but our people emerged from this pain to easier times as a result of its perseverance and patience [*sabyrlyk*].

This blackness is the same *karangylyk* described in the previous chapter.

<u>The Old Black Forest</u> All black is the forest, Dark night. Good horses are needed to pass through. During the period passing through the black forest, During the period the birds sing, ai, It is very melancholy then. The times are painful, The years are lean, To move through this world a true friend is needed. When we passed through the black forest, I cut down and took with me twin birches, ai, Let us not separate, my dear friend.	<u>Iske Kara Urman</u> Kara da gynai urman, Karangy tön. Yaxshy atlar kiräk läi utärgä, Kara urmanny chykkän chakta. Koshlar sairagan chakta, ai, Bik yamansu shul chakta. Zamanalar avyr, Ellar yabyk, Dus-ish kiräk dön'yalar kötärgä. Kara urmanny chykkän chakta, Kisep aldym kush kaen, ai, Aerylmyik, duskaem.
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Figure 7.3. Lyrics to Kara Urman

When I asked Sveta *apa* how lyrics about nature pertain to actual histories of suffering, she responded as follows:

Mong is the tree that grows next to the freshwater spring. It is the birds in the barn. *Mong* gives of the reserve of happiness and joy that accumulates during those times in our lives when living is good. But, life is like that—it has good times and bad ones as well. During bad times the people have acquired the ability to summon their own *mong* and imagine poetic words. Thinking about composing meaningful words, the people have learned how to try to understand its situation. They have learned how to make the bad times pass—to put itself at ease and to emerge from that painful situation intact.

Mong is therefore historical for at least three reasons. It conjures up a past prior to and better than the pain of the present. It has been used as a tool to live through difficult moments in Tatar history. And it reminds singers and listeners of the historical moments when Tatar people needed *mong* most.

Allegorical History

Even though Tatars speak of *mong* as an expression of Tatar historical tragedy, the lyrics to mongful songs never concern history. This is remarkable because Kazan Tatars often speak of the horrors perpetuated when Ivan the Terrible conquered Kazan in 1552, such as how the Volga River flowed red with blood and how, later, Tatars were forcibly, sometimes unawares, baptized with water from that river.²⁰ This forms part of a

larger discourse about how Russian conquest, colonization, and subsequent Soviet rule served to forcibly assimilate masses of Eurasian Turks. Tatars also describe how their forefathers were kept off well-watered, fertile land after 1552 and barred from pursuing trade until the 18th century. However, these themes are never addressed in song. Rather, *mong* song lyrics convey the burden of existence [*tormysh avyrlygy*] allegorically, frequently concerning separation [*aeru*], a euphemism for death. Tatars see the pain of death separation clearly in lyrics about how the wild goose that landed on the lake has flown away. Lyrics about love refer to universalized mother love and never to the individual romantic variety, known as *mäxäbät*.²¹

<u>The Wild Goose</u> The wild geese have flown away, have you seen how they rose up into the air? The wild goose Is on the edge of the Idel [Volga River], My lonely head aches so. Do you know, my friend, do you feel it The separations that are about to take place? The wild goose Plays so in the waters. My lonely head forever thinks of you. The geese with goslings are in the water, The childless ones fish on its edge; The wild goose Is on the edge of the Idel, My lonely head aches so. We're parting, my friend, do you feel it, Will you miss me in a foreign land? The wild goose Plays so in the waters, My lonely head forever thinks of you.	<u>Kvr Kazy</u> Kyr kazlary ochty, kürdegezme Havalarga menep kitkänen? Kyr kazy Idellär chitendä. Yalgyz bashym minga chiten lä Beläsengme, dustym, sinäsengme Aerylular kilep jtkänen? Kyr kazy Sularda uinyi shul. Yalgyz bashym gel sine uilyi. Balaly la kazlar su echendä, Balasyzlar suniy chitendä; Kyr kazy Idellär chitendä. Yalgyz bashym minga chiten lä. Aerylabyz, dustym, sinäsengme, Sagynyrsyngmy mine chit ildä? Kyr kazy Sularda uinyi shul. Yalgyz bashym gel sine uilyi.
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Figure 7.4. Lyrics to The Wild Goose

The Gulag

Invoking *mong* to convey unspecified moments of historical tragedy allegorically may mask tragedies that have occurred in real historic time. Examining how Soviet history has personally affected Sveta *apa* suggests a more conventional explanation for why *mong* signifies both nostalgia for an idyllic past and grief-sorrow.

Sveta *apa*'s father was a talented singer of *mongly jyrlar*. He also fought in the Soviet Armed Forces against the Nazis during World War II. After the war, Sveta *apa*'s father was arrested—probably as a “traitor” for having been interned in a German POW camp—and sentenced to 25 years in a labor camp outside Irkutsk, in Siberia. He was freed in the mid-1950s after serving ten years of his sentence, at a time when the majority of the Soviet Union's slave labor force was released following Stalin's death in 1953. His granddaughter, Hayat *apa*, once showed me a picture of him after his return from the Gulag. Similar to images of Nazi concentration camp survivors, the face in the black-and-white photograph was haggard, drawn and covered in wrinkles, with eyes that burned forth with knowledge of unspeakable horror. During our interview Sveta *apa* informed me that her father had been able to maintain his inner world while in the Gulag, and that he had remained a human being—a *keshe*—despite the experience of being there. “It seems he was able to preserve himself,” she explained. “This is connected to those *mongly jyrlar*.”²²

Sveta *apa* described the awakening of her own *mong* as occurring while her father was serving in the Soviet Army. She said she had begun to sing at the age of seven, during the war. At the time, there was still no television, no radio, and no electricity in the village. The villagers used kerosene lamps for light, she told me. Singing was the primary form of entertainment. After her father's arrest, when Sveta *apa* would have been in her early teens, she traveled to Siberia to visit him at least once. Though *mong* possessed Sveta *apa* early in childhood, its full power as an expression of grief-sorrow seems to have been revealed to her after her father returned from Siberia. Such experiences—transitions from innocence to awareness—are in fact a collective phenomenon for Kazan Tatars and members of Soviet nationalities who remained in the USSR after the 1917 revolution or returned there after World War II. Every family I got to know suffered at least one such tragedy during the years of Soviet rule.

Other *Mongs*

Sveta *apa*'s niece, Hayat *apa*, also granted me a formal interview on the topic of *mong*.²³ Present at the interview with Hayat *apa* was her friend, Venera *apa*, a surgeon and, like Hayat *apa*, a woman in her mid-forties. When I asked the two women what *mong* is, Venera *apa* was quick to answer. “A *mongful* person is a person who understands the feeling born of separation sorrow, a person who sings his or her own sorrow melodi-

ously, a person who is able to put sorrow into song..." I turned to Hayat *apa* and asked whether she agreed with her friend. She immediately shifted to a larger frame of analysis:

I agree, but *mong* is connected to a particular person's nation. It is a feeling connected to the nation because for some nations *mong* is deeper, more painful, and more widespread. In others, *mong* is shallower, less burdensome, and less widespread. This has to do with whether nations have had many trials, whether a people has lived through a lot, and endured a long existence.²⁴ *Mong* is a deep inner feeling, though for some nations *mong* is only in their song.

Hayat *apa* thus distinguishes between two kinds of nations—one whose *mong* is deeper due to great suffering and another whose *mong* shallower because its suffering is less, and consequently only exists in song.

Repeating a question I put to Sveta *apa*, I asked Hayat *apa* whether *mong* is an exclusively Tatar trait. Sveta *apa* had responded that she thought other Turks most likely possess *mong*, but that, except for Bashkir songs, she had little familiarity with their music.²⁵ Demonstrating a perspective broader than her aunt's, Hayat *apa* remarked that she has heard *mong* in folk songs from the British Isles. Speaking of a people closer to home, Hayat *apa* continued:

For example, I would not say that this thing called *mong* is not deep in the Russian people. Sometimes we say that our Russian people...that the word *mong* is not in the Russian people and that it has no meaning for them. But, the Russian people have endured many trials, has seen many tragedies, and as a nation has been a political victim.

Unlike her aunt, Hayat *apa* made a direct link between horrors committed during the years of Soviet power and the existence of *mong*. She also acknowledged that Soviets of all nationalities suffered during the socialist period. She clarified as follows:

Political victim. You see, Tatars think that Russian politi...politicians of Russian nationality were the victimizers...but politicians of Tatar nationality created political victims as well. Political victimization came from many directions. However, Tatars' *mong* is deeper and heavier. That *mong* is the nation's *mong*. For example, our Tatar nation has its own *mong*. Every generation has its own *mong* because every generation has its own trials and every person has his or her own *mong*. Taken altogether, I think that a person has to have some sort of inner world, to have experienced the tragedy of the world.

Hayat *apa* recognizes *mong* as something determined variously according to national, generational, and individual experiences. She perceives it as a

metaphor for tragedy extending beyond the specific context of singing and listening to songs. In fact, she asserted that music is not required for a person to know *mong*.

Mong can be very deep in a person who does not know a single song, a single tune. *Mong* can be very deep in a person who does not know how to sing. In the first place, it is understood that *mong* is the heart [*küñgel*] of a person who knows how to sing. However, a person who doesn't know how to sing can still be full of *mong*.

I asked Hayat *apa* what *mong*'s origins were. In response, she shifted her focus from the recent tragedies of the nation that are still part of living memory to *mong* as an expression of sorrow by practical, intelligent women lacking the proper political tools to battle patriarchy during the pre-colonial period:

A very long time ago Tatar women placed their own pain in *mong*. Why did they place it in *mong*? Because, how do I say it? *Mong* had entered their hearts. First of all, even if they had a lot of opportunities, they were not able to take their own places in the republic. They were not able to take their place in the republic. That was also *mong* because, even though they had opportunities, because of certain laws they couldn't find their own place in that republic. We call this *mong*: they were not able to provide for the fates of their children. Their desire to provide for the fates of their children was very great. However, authority hung over their heads and they weren't able to provide for their children. [At the time,] there were a greater number of practical, intelligent women and they knew better [than women today] what would make for happy marriages for their daughters and sons. But, they were not able to make this known.

Hayat *apa*'s inclusion of Russians and other ethnic groups as capable of possessing *mong* and her use of *mong* to express a feminist critique of pre-colonial Eurasian society reflect aspects of her social position as a teacher and a mother. First, her role as a teacher of Tatar language in various educational institutions requires that Hayat *apa* bridge cultural gaps between Kazan's nationalities on a daily basis. Second, she was the mother of two unmarried sons for whose futures she wanted to provide. Like other Tatars, Hayat *apa*'s social position influences how she understands and speaks about *mong*. Even while acting as an authority on Tatar culture, Hayat *apa* uses talk about *mong* as an opportunity to express how the world looks from her personal perspective.

Sveta *apa* sees *mong* as a force bestowed by God upon people whose inner worlds are cultivated [*tārbiialāngān*]. Not a possession of individuals, *mong* belongs to the entire nation because collectively calling it forth through song allows the nation to survive painful historical periods. The

nation for her is the Tatar nation, although she acknowledges that Bashkirs have mongful songs and concedes that other Turks probably do as well. Venera *apa*, by contrast, understands *mong* to be the ability of certain individuals to express sorrow, which she presumes to be a Tatar trait. Hayat *apa*, less ethnically insular in her everyday interactions than the other two women and used to presenting Tatar culture to outsiders, suggests that *mong* assumes different forms depending upon the varying factors determining a person's social position. These include nation, generation, individual experiences, and gender.

Unlike the other interviewees, Hayat *apa* asserts that every nation possesses *mong*, but that the depth of that nation's historical tragedy and the extent to which it has been a victim of political repression dictates the profundity of its grief-sorrow. Thus, she acknowledges that Russians have *mong*, but that theirs is not as deep as Tatar *mong*, because, she suggests, while Russians have been political victims, Tatar politicians participated in russifying policies, thus betraying their own nation. Her statement implies a national gradation of guilt. Even so, Hayat *apa*'s vocation as a teacher of Tatar language to diverse groups of people means that she has to find ways to appeal to, as well as make appealing to herself, the inner worlds of persons belonging to different nationalities.

Transformative Returns

Mong is both an experienced practice and a transformative metaphor. Cultural anthropologist James Fernandez makes a compelling argument for how children, whom he terms inchoate subjects, acquire knowledge of their adult roles through the predication upon them of their culture's core metaphors. The processes through which children expressively learn to perform these metaphors allow them to situate themselves indexically as members of their communities and thereby "return to the whole," that is, become fully integrated members of society.²⁶

As helpful as Fernandez's model is for conceptualizing how children become acculturated, it is nonetheless ahistorical. Unlike his inchoate subjects, young Tatars do not return to the whole inhabited by their elders. This is true for young urban and young rural Tatars alike. Dissimilar from the generations who grew up under Soviet rule, young urban Tatars have not discarded Tatar as their native language. They are nonetheless surrounded by the Russian language and deeply enmeshed in cultural space replete with Russian metaphors. Being surrounded by things Russian

means, in essence, that urban Tatars acquire the core metaphors of overlapping cultural spaces inscribed in uses of two different languages. Likewise, rural Tatars, upon reaching adulthood, enter into “a whole” different from that inhabited by their parents. Unlike urban Tatars, rural Tatars inhabit a cultural space predicated upon living in the Tatar language. Even so, the collapse of the Soviet Union has caused the cultural space all Tatars enter upon reaching adulthood to both exponentially expand and contract in ways their parents cannot comprehend. Post-Soviet cultural space has expanded insofar as previously nonexistent opportunities have sprung up to travel, acquire wealth, and experience the cultural and consumer products of non-socialist countries. Cultural space has simultaneously contracted since most ex-Soviets’ plummeting standard of living has curtailed their ability to travel even within once-Soviet territory, to maintain their health through adequate nutrition and taking vacations, and also to purchase clothing, books, appliances, and so on. These revolutionary changes have affected every aspect of Tatar life, including *mong*. What then is the place of *mong* among Kazan’s new generation of Tatar-speakers, who though living with the city’s urban rhythms, perceive authentic Tatariness to lie in village life?

Generational Transmission

The practice of singing mongful songs is rooted in a village life without modern amenities. This comprises part of living memory for most Tatars—even now, though villages have electricity, they usually lack plumbing, while Tatarstan’s “gasification” campaign to bring indoor heat to the villages occurred only in the 1990s. Even when *mong* is produced in other environments—on cruise ships or in classrooms—the participants are reenacting a village social setting. Though *mong* continues to be a central component of the lives of Tatars middle-aged and older raised in a rural environment, it has grown peripheral to younger Tatars’ *tārbiia*. As Sveta *apa* explained:

Song is the Tatar’s constant companion. At every social gathering, during every holiday celebration, songs are sung. Now there is television and radio. Now at gatherings people put other kinds of music on the tape player. This tradition is leaving us. Before the entire people participated. Singing would help to get work done. Now children study singing in school. This is not good because it is no longer the entire people.

Sveta *apa* described the paradox stemming from the re-urbanization of Tatar society:

Generally, the ancient songs are changing and leaving us now. They are disappearing. They still exist, but they're receding. All the same, the people listen a lot to these long, mongful songs, always with feelings of deep love, and a person who can sing passes around strength among the people listening to the songs. Unfortunately, though, this meaning is passing away and leaving our life.

This transformation mirrors a generational transition in what constitutes a social gathering. Unlike their elders, young urban Tatars generally prefer dancing to popular music to sitting around a table singing songs. However, when the dances have adult chaperones as those held at schools always do, the adults maintain the old traditions—drinking tea, eating cakes, and singing—while their children dance to new songs in a neighboring room. The majority of the songs played at these dances are Russian and Europop, which means that young urban Tatars may have greater familiarity with the hits of Turkish pop icon Tarkan than they do with music in their “native” tongue. By contrast, discos organized in Tatar villages play mostly Tatar popular songs. And at the Friday night discos held in Kazan’s new *Tugan Avlym* restaurant complex—targeting, I was told, villagers who haven’t yet adjusted to city life—all the music is Tatar and people sing along with their favorites while they dance.

Beyond these significant changes to the ways Tatars socialize, younger Tatars also have the good fortune to be generationally removed from first-hand memories of the most extreme horrors perpetrated during the Soviet period. While they absorb *mong* and feel it, asserting that *mong* is central to being Tatar, they rarely generate it through song. Several interviews with Tatar Lab School graduates, who are urban-dwelling, but make frequent visits to their parents’ native villages, demonstrated that they, at least, had difficulty formulating ideas about *mong* without reverting to speaking Russian. About eighteen years old when I interviewed them in 2001, these young adults are among the first urban cohorts to enjoy the decreased stigma against speaking Tatar in public. Here are the key lines from an interview with two of them, typical in terms of the code-switching that takes place as young Tatars translate the untranslatable. *Italics indicate Tatar; bold signifies Russian.*

A: *It is very difficult to explain correctly about mong. The necessary feeling...*

E: **Soulful, I would say...**

A: *Yes.*

E: **Soulful.**

A: *It's a certain, it is a word that cannot be directly understood when translated. Perhaps we Tatars can explain, but, as I understand it, a Russian word, in Russian language there is no such word. Because the information, even a certain national feeling, is not there. Tatar people. Mong. Mongful songs are in the people's heart, as I understand it. A certain...*

E: **Soul.**

A: **Soul.** *It is connected to soul...*

These teenagers, who had been among those in Sveta *apa's* class when she sang *Täftiläü*, employed the Russian word for "soul"—*dusha*—as a calque for the Tatar concept of a person's inner world.²⁷ By contrast, older Tatar-speakers never rely on discourse about the "soul"—*jan* in Tatar—to explain *mong*. While Tatars in early adulthood figuring out what it means to be urban and Tatar-speaking in Russian society find deep significance in emotional *mong*, *mong* is not something they frequently tap into by singing or about which are they adept at speaking.

Active understandings of *mong* seem to be embedded in cultural practices that occur when speaking Tatar. However, not only do most young urban Tatars prefer dancing to singing, they speak Tatar language exclusively in school and university classes with their Tatar-dominant teachers. Many respond in Russian when their parents address them in Tatar. Thus, although these younger Tatars can recognize *mong* and feel it, they lack, for the time being at any rate, the necessary linguistic and life experiences to discuss *mong* at an ideological level.

When I returned to Tatarstan in 2006, I asked some young men about *mong* and found that, like the women I spoke to, they each shared a personal interpretation of *mong's* meanings that reflected who they are as individuals. These young men all consider themselves part of an urban nationalist movement and range in age from their mid-20s to mid-30s. They all grew up in villages and prefer speaking Tatar to Russian and all have university educations. Three are journalists and one is a singer/songwriter musician. Only one of them, whom I barely knew, proved incapable of speaking articulately about *mong*. The other three men spoke eloquently on the subject.

I interviewed the musician while we were drinking tea at the apartment of one of the journalists. Like the young women in the previous excerpt, the two of them generated a collaborative response. *Italics*=Tatar; **bold**=Russian; regular=English.

Musician: *In my opinion, mong is something that has come to us preserved from ancient times and an extremely important element in the nation's genetic makeup. And second, the word mong has commonalities with the blues tradition of blacks living in America. The meaning of the blues is very close to that of mong. Sorrow [mongস্যল্ক]. However, the meaning of the blues emerges from people who migrated to Chicago. It's from Chicago. Thus, it's not a village genre. It ends up being an urban genre. It developed its own qualities. And because it's an urban genre, the blues changed and lost its mongsulyk meaning. Tatars have retained mongsulyk. Some confuse mong with wretchedness [meskenlek]. But it's important not to confuse the two because pride is a characteristic of mong. In contemporary alternative music we try to preserve mong. New genres are coming into existence, the urban genre is growing. But we try not to lose mong, even though our music is urban....*

me: *Does mong only belong to music?*

M: *About music it's hard to say. Mong is somewhat more fundamental than music. Mong is a spiritual state. It's very difficult to say. What do you think, abiy?*

The musician appealed to the journalist. The journalist formulated his answer in Russian—he and I had done an interview several days previously during which, after five years outside a Tatar-speaking environment, I had had to switch to Russian. While the journalist is fully bilingual, he prefers speaking Tatar.

Journalist: *I think that mong is the soul's, a kind of melancholy, grief, a protest crammed into a melodic form. That's how it seems to me. That is, people have lived through genocide—Soviet genocide, imperial genocide, and now under...(he chuckled)...and so on. That is, among them a certain—how can I say it?—manifestation of a protest has formed, but it is a cramped protest only understandable by one's own people. That is, it's the same. Black people had their own songs, right? They have their ways and we have ours, different because our blood is different after all. Africans are somewhat more hot-blooded and braver, and we are somewhat chilly people. Their songs seem as if they would be more dynamic, while ours would be more melodic.*

- M: *Abiy, I'm going to interrupt you. The music of black people is best when black people play it. Black people know how to play the blues best. White people can't understand the blues. The same is true for Russians. Russians may be able to play Tatar music note for note. But, there is no mong in their music. They don't know how to give forth mong. The notes can be very exact, very correct. And there's no mong. A Tatar feels mong. A Tatar sees it. A Russian doesn't.*
- J: **That's your version?** *That mong and the blues are connected...that the blues are a kind of protest...*
- M: *Yes, yes. They...for us it's the forest. When people work in the forest they sing like that. African Americans building the railroad, working on the plantations, they sang. It's called a work song, right? When the blues was created as an urban genre, it lost its mongsulyk.*
- J: *Helen, maybe you can comment. Africans were slaves in America. Can you compare mong and that type of music, the blues? Not their musical notation, but perhaps there is a **kind of shared feeling of sorrow, a shared tragedy.***
- M: *It's not the same sound but we understand the blues at the level of underconscious. Underconscious? (He asked me in English.)*
- me: Subconscious.
- M: Subconscious.

The three of us left the journalist's apartment and went to the office where the other two journalists work. There I also asked about *mong*. The first journalist's response was halting and incomplete. He said:

*Mong is voice. It is voice. It is **folklore**. In order for mong to exist, there must be singing. I can't say anything **specific**. I don't know.*

The second journalist jumped in:

*As far as I'm concerned, mong is wretchedness [meskenlek]. "Life is difficult. Life is hard and the Tatar is wretched." People couldn't sing music **with their full voices**. They would be **found out**. But, sometimes, in the mountains, in the middle of the forest, they gave forth song. They were beaten down. They couldn't give forth **their full voice**. They gave forth meskenlek. "Tatars are mesken. Black forest, black forest." That's what it's about, right? Now, Tatars feel **freer** and that's why mong is disappearing.*

Each of the three men who could speak articulately about *mong* did so from his own unique perspective. The singer/songwriter musician who

had studied the blues found connections between *mong* and the blues. The journalist who writes articles protesting Russian domination sees *mong* as a form of cramped protest. And the journalist who lives life as if he were free rejects a form of expression that he considers a sign of subjugation.

The generational transmission of *mong* to urban Tatars is incomplete. That is, some urban Tatars receive, but are not able to actively manipulate *mong*'s meanings. Their inability to manipulate *mong* may stem from needing to "see a lot and live a lot," before acquiring the wisdom necessary for metadiscourse. Or the cause of their inability may be that they inhabit a world too strongly shaped by russophone culture to allow them to speak eloquently about *mong*. Others, more deeply embedded in Tatar language in quotidian life, are articulate on the topic of *mong*, though they may reject what they see as *mong*'s inherent quality of abjectness. All the same, *mong*'s prevalence among young, urban Tatars is novel and a result of changes brought about by Tatarstan's sovereignty project. These changes indicate that the referential and experiential worlds inhabited by people who speak Tatar are becoming increasingly differentiated from those of people who do not speak the language.

Conclusions

Tatars say that mongful songs contain the tragedy of the nation's history. However, unlike other forms of Tatar verbal expression, *mong* never refers to the particular events Tatar-speakers avow make their nation's history a tragic one. Diverse understandings of *mong*'s meaning allow Tatars to view it from their own individual perspectives, while at the same time promoting feelings of national unity. Indeed, the very inflexibility of *mong*'s form, as well as the non-specificity of its lyrics, makes for the possibility of multiple interpretations, and notwithstanding this multiplicity, *mong* as an experience is nearly uniform.

Mong provides a revealing insight into how Tatar emotions are structured. It allows audience members to disconnect their attention from their surroundings and to contemplate the grief-sorrow of their inner worlds. Unlike other Tatar social situations, it is permissible when listening to *mongly jyrlar* to withdraw your gaze and allow tears to well up in your eyes. Thus, while *mong* is an intensification of the essence of normative Tatar emotionality, it is also separate from quotidian behavioral norms.

Most importantly, *mong* demonstrates how Tatar nationalism works. Tatar-speakers almost universally say they experience *mong* the same way

and consider themselves to be talking about the same phenomenon when they discuss it. At the same time, Tatars use their diverse understandings of *mong*'s meaning as a platform for expressing the perspectives granted by their social roles and individual personalities. This diversity does not mask a contradiction in Tatar nationalist ideologies, but rather how Tatars experience a feeling of collective inclusiveness while expressing their own individuality. Tatars see no inconsistency in this, considering it both common sense and common knowledge that variation should occur. This belies presumptions that nationalist feelings require uniformity. Indeed, one reason Tatarstan has not suffered the violence that has affected the Baltics, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and other parts of the former Soviet Union since the 1980s is that Tatarstan nationalist ideologies stress collective belonging while allowing for individual variation and underscoring the constant need for peaceful negotiation.

Although *mong* as a practice is becoming extinct among younger Tatars, it nevertheless has gained ideological currency since the Soviet Union's collapse. Urban Tatars under 40 years of age, who spend most of their time away from village life, consider *mong* essential to being Tatar, even though some can say little about it without reverting to speaking in Russian. Surrounded as they are by the Russian language, except when among family members or studying Tatar in the classroom, certain Tatars have difficulty formulating ideas about *mong*, despite their internalized understanding of it. Other Tatars can speak eloquently about *mong*, but don't spend time singing mongful songs. It seems as if, while *mong* is disappearing as a practice, it is simultaneously assuming greater importance as a trope for being Tatar and may contribute to the continued divergence of Tatarstan's discursive worlds.

Notes

- 1 Sometimes these participant roles overlap when singers and listeners are the same people. Folklorist Izaly Zemtsovsky categorically denies that *mong* is a genre (personal communication). He also notes that *mong*'s "ancient melodies" are actually contained within modern songs. However, since Tatars consider *mong* to be a song genre and mongful songs to invoke something ancient, for the purposes of this discussion, I will take them at their word.
- 2 Thanks to Suzanne Wertheim for first informing me of the blues analogy.
- 3 For example, Jewish musician Leonid Davidovich, the now-deceased Tatarstan-trained, Russian-speaking leader of Kazan's klezmer band *Simkha* spontaneously brought up

- mong* as a topic, professing experiential knowledge of it, during a 2000 interview in Kazan's sole restored synagogue.
- 4 This construction follows a common pattern in Turkic languages for creating abstract nouns in which two words with the same or semantically very close meanings are doubled up. The abstract nouns are frequently created from two different source languages, as is this one, where the first component is Turkic and the second a borrowing from Arabic. *Kaygyi xäsärät* is the first of five definitions for *mong* given in Ganiev (2005), the *Tatar telenen' an'latmaly süzlege*. [Tatar Language Explanatory Dictionary.] The four others are (1) a feeling of the heart [*iöräk xise*], deep feeling invoked by tradition [*tirän xise*]; (2) tune, melody [*köi*], a collection of feelings [*xislär jyelmasy*]; (3) the meaning of form [*rävesh mäg'näse*]; (4) (dialect) shortage [*kimchelek*], deficiency [*jiteshezlek*].
 - 5 On the variation of emotion across cultures, see Besnier (2002); Feld (1990); González (2001); Hall and Bucholtz (1995); Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990); Morgan (2002); O'Neill (1996); Paxson (2005); Schiefflin and Ochs (1986); and Turner (1967), *inter alii*. See Ries (1997) on Russian litany and lamentation.
 - 6 Goffman (1986[1974]).
 - 7 I refer to Färidä Kudasheva as she asked me, using the Tatar kin-term *apa* in conjunction with her name.
 - 8 I found out later that this woman was the sister-in-law to the cruise's organizer and married to a Russian man, who had accompanied her on the cruise several times.
 - 9 As is common practice, the woman inserted the Tatar kin term into her Russian speech.
 - 10 Our turn to sing came as well.
 - 11 Turkic languages do not have gender; thus, I translate the personal pronoun *ul* as "s/he" and the possessive pronoun *anyng* as "his or her."
 - 12 Matshin (1993).
 - 13 See Chapter 2 for more on the content constraints of expressions made in Kazan's two major languages.
 - 14 This prohibition is the reason that the professional musicians in pre-Soviet Turkestan (now Central Asia, roughly) were all Jewish.
 - 15 This conversation occurred in December 2000. *Kük* is an ancient word that signifies the heavens, literally meaning the color turquoise—blue or green, or sometimes grey. *Tängre* is a pre-Islamic word for god. Chingis Khan worshipped Kük-Tängre, the Sky God. During the post-Soviet period, in Central Asia Tängrism, sometimes called shamanism, is enjoying revival.
 - 16 Social scientists habitually define private and public in this way, leaving little or no room for interstitial collectivist spheres of activity. See Anderson (1991) and Habermas (1989), in particular.
 - 17 The word Sveta *apa* used for God is *Kudai*, a loanword from Persian and consequently considered non-denominational in Tatar, as opposed to the Islamic *Allah*. Similar to Tatar linguistic structure in which there is no gender, i.e., one word [*ul*] connotes he, she, and it, in Islam, God likewise has no gender.
 - 18 There are of course no hymns in Islam. Sveta *apa* used the Russian loanword "gym," which could alternatively be rendered as "anthem."
 - 19 Her father is deceased.

- 20 Baptism is considered a violation among other reasons because baptized Tatars had their names changed to Russian ones and thus lost the ability to identify the patrilineal members of their families.
- 21 When I pressed the point, Sveta *apa* said that a *mongly jyr* about separation could perhaps possibly refer to romantic love.
- 22 Sveta *apa*'s exact words were: *Ul üze saklap kalgandyr. Bu shu mongly jyrlar belän bایلä.*
- 23 Differences in the mechanics of the two interviews provide indicators of differences in the two women's worldviews, as well as in the extent of our intimacy. The interview with Sveta *apa* took place in the school where she teaches. We drank tea beforehand and afterwards to frame the transitions to and from the event of the videotaped interview. By contrast, the interview with Hayat *apa* took place in her apartment in the evening after a dinner during which we had consumed a bottle of wine.
- 24 Hayat *apa*'s exact phrase was *küp körgän*—"having seen a lot and hence grown wise" is how Tatars formulate the experience of long life.
- 25 Sveta *apa* is not alone in this thought. For example, a short article that appeared in the Tatar literary journal *Miras* on the work of 13th–14th century Ottoman poet Yunus Emre contains the word *mong* in its title, despite the fact that the piece does not concern song or any other conventional manifestation of *mong*. See Äxmät (1996). Likewise, Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk describes the melancholic emotion of *hüzün* particular to residents of Istanbul in his memoir *Istanbul: Memories and the City*.
- 26 Fernandez (1986: 31; 188–213).
- 27 See Pesmen (2001) for an exploration of how Russians in Omsk employ the word *dusha* to explain their lives. Their commentaries have remarkably little to do with inner worlds and a great deal to do with making sense of exterior circumstances.

CHAPTER 8

WORDS APART

Today marks the anniversary of the day Ivan the Terrible captured Kazan. People came out of cafés and stores to watch the procession commemorating *Xäter köne* as it traveled down Pushkin Street from Freedom Square on its way to the Kremlin. Eavesdropping on the conversations of the people standing around watching it, I overheard the end of a disagreement between two women in their late fifties or early sixties. One, a bleached blonde, drowned out the words of the other, whose hair was dyed red, vocalizing condescendingly in Russian, “You don’t understand, little one, they are starving us!” The redheaded woman turned out to be a Tatar-speaker. She looked to be significantly older, not younger, than the woman who had the last word.

Field notes, October 15, 1999

Listed in the Tatar Islamic calendar under October 15, *Xäter köne* or Memory Day is an annual event that began in 1989.¹ Each year, people commemorating Memory Day, who range in number from several hundred to several thousand, gather at Freedom Square at around 10 in the morning. Some are Kazan Tatars. Others are Mari or Chuvash.² Political speeches are made. Popular Tatar singers sing songs. The memory of Ivan the Terrible’s massacre of the Kazan Khanate’s defenders is invoked. Sometimes speakers mention Russia’s current policies—Putin’s campaign against Tatarstan sovereignty or the endless war in Chechnya. After the rally, young people dressed as historical personages—Söyembike, Kazan’s last Tatar ruler, and her warriors [*batirlar*]³—take their places in the back of a flatbed Kamaz truck. The truck leads the procession, followed by a van with a loudspeaker and demonstrators carrying banners in Tatar and Russian. The year I observed *Xäter köne* the van issued forth announcements in both languages. In Tatar, the speaker exhorted Tatars not to forget what happened in 1552. In Russian, he reminded listeners that “Christians and Muslims live in harmony in Tatarstan and that Russian imperialism slanders Islam, the most just of all religions.” In past years, after reaching the Kremlin, the demonstrators would hold Muslim prayers at the base of Söyembike Tower and then lay flowers in a sign of mourn-

ing for those who perished in 1552. Since 2005 they pray inside Kol Shārif Mosque.

Tatars who write about *Xäter köne* in the press make it clear that the event is not intended to foment bad feeling against Russians. They stress that Russians also lived in the Kazan Khanate and died during its conquest, just as there were Muslims fighting on the side of Ivan the Terrible. Nevertheless they maintain that because Islam was the dominant religion of the Kazan Khanate, even Tatars who aren't religious or who are Käräshen should respect the need to pray as Muslims in honor of *Xäter köne*.³ However, as the epigraph to this chapter implies, these niceties fall on deaf ears.



Figure 8.1. Söyembike Surrounded by her Warriors



Figure 8.2. The Marchers Prepare

The analysis in this book demonstrates the social effects of Tatarstan's sovereignty movement, revealing some of the ways in which sovereignty contributed to the division of Soviets in Tatarstan into groups inhabiting increasingly differentiated discursive worlds. Once Gorbachev initiated his program of reforms in 1986, a lack of ideological stability and the sudden absence of previously existing material resources compelled Kazanians to seek out new ways to orient themselves to a world radically different from what they knew previously. Moving towards those new orientations has had the unintended consequences of changing people's subjectivities and their worldviews—in effect, it catalyzed the unmaking of Soviet people.

An overview of Tatar-speakers social and historical conditions demonstrates that prior to the Soviet Union's collapse even fully integrated Tatar bilingual intellectuals in Kazan experienced life differently from monolingual Russians. Letters to the editor published in Tatarstan's Russian- and Tatar-language Communist Party Organ newspapers document this divergence in discursive worlds. Examining the alphabet reforms that have taken place since the 1920s reveals competing attitudes towards ideologies of the nation and whom it includes. These national ideologies emerge from deeply embedded cultural beliefs and practices. They make themselves manifest in physical space, as Tatars reclaim Kazan by building Tatar cultural and religious monuments and populating Kazan's public domains with the Tatar language through an ongoing process of linguistic domestication. In Tatarstan, speaking the Tatar language has other implications as well, since it taps into a local racial ideology that essential difference emerges from repeated practices, whereas racial difference in Russia as a whole is based upon a person's national identity. Most significantly, these practices include the melancholic song genre *mong*, which strengthens Tatars' connections to one another because of the variation with which Tatar-speakers are encouraged to articulate its meaning and contributes to their increasingly profound feelings of difference from people who do not speak Tatar.

While the specific processes that make for differences between Tatar-speakers and non-Tatars are particular to Tatarstan, as a phenomenon they represent the kinds of changes taking place in people's subjectivities throughout the former Soviet Union as the discursive worlds people inhabited previous to glasnost and perestroika underwent abrupt reconfiguration. This reconfiguration consisted both of an immense expansion in potential access to infinitely varied information and experiences and a simultaneous contraction of peoples' material ability to obtain that access.

This final chapter presents definitive empirical evidence for Soviet people's unmaking. It describes the multiplication of Russia's publics by showing that living in different languages has increasingly caused people to inhabit different discursive worlds, even as they occupy the same physical space. It illustrates this proposition by showing how children in Russia, at whom transmissions of conflicting and competing national ideologies are aimed daily, make different sense out of them depending in great part upon their primary language of identification. It also explains how many nation-builders have shifted their focus from language to religion and describes the emergence of a new movement of urban Tatar-speakers.

No Longer Soviet

While a handful of die-hard old-age pensioners doggedly continue to participate in Soviet holidays, such as annual May Day celebrations, the only people under 50 who attend the event are university-aged anarchists cheerfully selling copies of their newspaper, *The Kazan Anarchist*. In place of an overarching Soviet identity, people in Kazan now feel affinity to other kinds of publics that lack the finite, inelastic boundaries of the Soviet Union. For example, Kazan Jews say they feel stronger affinity to the local Jewish community now that they are allowed to openly celebrate holidays like Purim and perform Jewish religious rites like *bar mitzvahs*. At the same time, they have ties to the state of Israel, from whom they receive funding for their school, and more strongly, to all their friends and family members who have emigrated from Russia to other parts of the world.

Like Kazan Jews, Volga Germans have reacquired one of their pre-revolutionary houses of worship and freely perform the Lutheran religious services that bind them together as a community. Yet, deeper involvement in their local community of identification simultaneously serves to remind Volga Germans of their ties to the state of Germany, which both sends the pastors who read the Sunday sermons at their church and material aid in the form of donations, and serves as a destination to which many of them hope to "repatriate" themselves.

Also as a result of sovereignty, other Kazanians hold diverse views regarding where the metropole lies—Kazan, Moscow, or Mecca—depending upon place of origin, nationality, and level of religiosity. Sovereignty has simultaneously altered Kazan. The city's increasing beautifi-

cation and reinvigoration from its prior state of provincial capital decrepitude has given birth to increasing pride of place among Tatarstan residents. Like Tatar-speakers, Russian-speakers express deep satisfaction in the changes the city has undergone and can exhibit a patriotic love for Kazan. This multiplication of imagined metropolises reflects a loss of authority on the part of the Russian state, no longer capable of maintaining the hegemonic idea that the Russian way is the best way.

Beyond this, despite their strong emotional connections to their *tugan yak* or native territory, Tatars also conceive of the communities they belong to exist in at least two further ways not defined by state borders. First, when they envisage themselves as part of an ethnic Tatar community, they picture people like themselves to inhabit—in addition to Tatarstan—Bashkortostan, parts of Siberia, Moscow, St. Petersburg, the city of Gorky, Japan, Turkey, Australia, Canada, and Burlingame, California. These places all contain Tatar diaspora communities that Tatarstan's printed, radio, and television mass media have actively documented since the 1980s. Second, when Tatars speak of themselves as belonging to the *umma*, that is, the worldwide Muslim community, they express affinity to Turkey, Arab states, Central Asians, Muslims in Europe and America, and, of greatest significance to the discussion at hand, Chechens.

The Scourge of Chechnya

While the Tatar national revival provoked negative reactions from Russians from its very inception, the rupture between how Tatar-speakers and Russian-speakers perceive the world became starkly apparent to Tatar-speakers only with the onset of the Second Chechen War in 1999. In Russia's first ever decade of democratic government, public opinion indicted Boris Yeltsin for beginning the first Chechen War, while Russia's demoralizing defeat in 1996 contributed to Yeltsin's loss of popular support. Like Tatarstan, Chechnya is an ethnically inflected polity within Russia containing a Muslim indigenous population. Also similar to Tatarstan, Chechnya engaged in a vigorous political movement for sovereignty beginning in the 1980s, based upon the Leninist right to national self-determination. In contrast to Tatarstan, the Chechen government insisted upon its right to secede from the Russian Federation. In 1994, Russia invaded Chechnya and plunged the lives of all Chechnya's inhabitants, including the ethnic Russians living there, into chaos. While 1994 was the year that Tatarstan implemented its new bilingual education curriculum, it

marked the last year in the 20th century that children in Chechnya attended school on a regular basis.

The Russian government and Russian-language media, unofficially once more under government censorship, represent all Chechens as traitors and a criminally “dangerous element.” Well before any Chechens were clearly implicated in terrorist acts, the Russian government treated them all like terrorists. In 1999, nearly 300 people died in a series of apartment building bombings in Moscow and the Caucasian republic of Dagestan. Vladimir Putin, who was Russia’s Prime Minister at the time, blamed Chechen separatists and used the explosions as his primary justification for starting a new war in Chechnya in 1999 which was supported by most Russians.⁴ Since then, Chechens have become completely marginalized in their own state and some have committed acts of desperation befitting pariahs. These acts include suicide bombings (the first Chechen men began to kill people in suicide attacks in 2000 with Chechen women following suit in 2001), the hostage crisis at Moscow’s Dubrovka Theatre in 2002, the gory Beslan school occupation in 2004, perhaps the explosion on board the Nevsky Express Train that killed 27 in 2009, and so on.

Monolingual Russian-speakers tend to accept the Russian government’s representations of these conflicts. Russian-speakers I consulted often viewed the war as an effort to protect the country from Chechen “bandits.” By contrast, Tatar bilinguals frequently expressed sympathy for Chechens’ plight as outcasts within their own state. They were predisposed to see the war as one against the people of Chechnya—a genocide perpetrated against “our own citizens”—and bemoaned the tragic and unnecessary loss of life it causes both Chechens and Russian soldiers. How Kazan bilinguals viewed the war is illustrated by the following two examples.

Even though she had retired many years previously, in 2000 Tatar-speaking Nur *apa* still occasionally worked as House Manager at Kazan’s House of Actors. Sometimes she would finish work too late to catch public transportation to her apartment in the New Tatar Quarter and would take a taxi home. One night, in a cab, she started talking to her driver. She could tell he wasn’t Russian. So she asked, “Are you Muslim?” “Yes, I am,” he replied. “Are you Tatar?” she inquired. “No, auntie, I am not Tatar.” “What nationality are you?” Nur *apa* asked. “Oh, auntie,” the driver responded, “you don’t want to know what nationality I am. It’s such a terrible thing.” He seemed to be on the brink of tears. Nur *apa* insisted, as was her nature, and discovered that the driver was Chechen. He didn’t like to tell strangers because they usually reacted with horror and

disgust. When they reached Nur *apa*'s building, she got out of the car, walked around to the driver's door, and opened it. She bent over and embraced the driver, murmuring, "Oh, my son, my son," before she walked up the four flights of stairs to her apartment.

In the summer of 2001, I was at a late-night wine-drinking party with a bunch of Tatar intellectuals in their 40s. The lingua franca was Tatar. One intellectual, Ilsiye, explained the recent changes in Tatarstan society. Ilsiye said, "Before, Tatars and Russians were all part of one homogenous society. But now it seems that we are on two separate paths because Tatars want to develop a more humanitarian society based on pluralism. I used to have Russian friends, but I don't anymore." The breaking point was the Chechen War. Ilsiye was shocked to discover that her well-read, Russian intelligentsia friends thought it necessary to annihilate the entire Chechen people, "Not just the terrorists, but all of them. Previously," she concluded, "we Tatars lived with Russians because we wanted to, but now we live with them because we have no choice, because we are afraid of Moscow." However, it is not only linguistic ability, but likewise contexts and patterns of language use that influence people's attitudes. Several Tatar-speakers I interviewed in Moscow and St. Petersburg, who neither share Tatarstan Tatars' fear of military invasion by Russian forces nor actively participate in the broad-reaching Tatar-speaking networks available to people living in Tatarstan, had little sympathy for Chechens' plight.

Perspectives from Kazan Schoolchildren

Attitudes towards Chechnya among Kazan's schoolchildren likewise provide a telling example of how thought worlds have become divided based upon primary language of identification. Like the pupils I observed in several Kazan schools, children from the Lab School's Tatar and Russian classes socialize together in the hallways and at school events, including dances and celebrations of Teacher's Day, International Woman's Day, and Halloween. They also sometimes date across linguistic lines. However, even at the Lab School, organized according to progressive, democratic principles, children in the Tatar and Russian classes viewed the war in Chechnya from irreconcilably different points of view.

Many children in the Russian classes described themselves as ethnically mixed or even as Tatar, but did not speak Tatar at home. Indeed, the fact that they moved through a world configured in Russian language

seemed to imply unwavering identification, at least in public, with the Russian nation as a collective of people. At the beginning of our first conversational English lesson in the fall of 1999, the eleventh grade Russian class asked me, without prompting, what Americans thought about the war in Chechnya. I responded that those Americans who knew where Chechnya was were appalled by reports that Russian troops were committing atrocities there. The class claimed ignorance of any such reports. In order to inform them, I downloaded several articles from the Internet from US-news sources, which reported that Russian troops were raping and murdering unarmed Chechen civilians, and brought them to our next meeting. The teenagers quickly scanned the articles. Most of them responded immediately to the allegations with outrage and anger, which they directed towards me. One girl, in particular, who identified as half-Tatar, half-Russian stood up and exclaimed that it was insulting to the young men who were dying to defend the country from terrorists to entertain the possibility that atrocities were being committed. Another boy, who identified as Russian, claimed that there is slavery in Chechnya and it must be stopped. The only exception to the general consensus came from a boy who identified as half-Tatar—his mother was Tatar—who said that Putin was a double dealer. All the other children, many of whom weren't ethnic Russians, including one who prided himself that his grandfather—a painter—was from the United Arab Emirates, supported the war unquestioningly. Apparently reproducing opinions expressed by their parents and Russian-language Moscow media sources, the Russian-speaking children said the war was a just struggle against terrorists and any act bordering on criticism of Russia's troops, including reading foreign-press articles claiming Russian soldiers have committed atrocities, was an inflammatory insult to the Russian nation. After this meeting, the whole class stood me up at the time appointed for our next lesson the following week. That was the thankful end to our conversational English lessons, though we continued to spend time together informally at school events.

When Hayat *apa*, the class teacher of the eleventh-grade Tatar group, learned about the articles I had given the Russian-identified children, she asked that I furnish her class the same materials, for, she explained, "They have to receive information from as many sources as possible." I brought the articles to my next English lesson with the Tatar class and we read through them together. The Tatar girls were generally very shy about discussing any matters pertaining to sex in front of the boys. On one occasion when the topic of birth control came up, they ushered the male students out of the classroom, giggling nervously, and locked the door behind

them, literally barring them from participation in the discussion. On this occasion, the girls were deeply somber, but expressed no shock whatsoever: They told me they were not surprised to learn that Russian soldiers were engaging in drunken hooliganism and raping and murdering girls. The boys remained completely silent. The Tatar class, like their parents, considered the war in Chechnya and general discrimination against Chechens to be acts of brutality by Russia against its own people and yet another example of Russian imperialist aggression against Muslims.

Home language seemed crucial to how the students interpreted competing ideologies of nationhood. During Putin's ascent to power in 1999–2000, attitudes among Tatarstan adolescents towards Tatarstan's bilingual education policies generally parsed into two types—ethnically Tatar children proud of speaking Tatar who hoped to create a pluralist, bilingual society on Tatarstan territory and everyone else. Children in the former group embraced, if loosely, Tatarstan policies of multiculturalism and rejected exclusionary Russian nationalism. (By the time they reached their mid-20s, as Russia became increasingly conservative and xenophobic, their idealism was largely snuffed.) By contrast, most non-Tatars and many Russian-speaking Tatars dismissed Tatarstan ideological pluralism as a mask for exclusionary Tatar nationalism.⁵

During sovereignty, a pervasive shift took place among members of Tatarstan's bilingual population with regards to how they comprehend the Russian pronoun for “we”—*my*.⁶ Before the Soviet Union collapsed, older Tatar-speakers explained, they generally felt included in the category connoted by *my*. Since, many have discovered that *my* excludes them. Thus, the two groups of children to which I showed news items on Chechnya reacted differently because the Russian-identified pupils perceived themselves as part of a single solidary group with the “Russian” soldiers represented in Moscow media—who in fact come from every nationality living in Russia—while the Tatar-identified children felt alienated from that group. When bilinguals hear the pronoun “we” voiced in the hegemonic language, Russian, they are more likely to perceive “we” as excluding rather than including them.

Parallel to this shift is one in the speech of Russia's president. When the Soviet Union split up, for the first time since before the 1917 revolution it became necessary to find a way to talk about Russian territorial nationhood. As a result, the imperial-era term “*rossiiskoe*,” meaning pertaining to the territory of Russia, was revived and used by President Yeltsin and others to refer to the nation. While Yeltsin remained president, Russian national ideologies projected a relatively inclusive vision of the

state. By contrast, almost immediately after assuming office, Putin began to speak of the nation as “*russskoe*,” a term which means “ethnic Russian” and suggests that Russians are the state’s only authentic citizens.

As ideologies projected by the government in Moscow about who belongs in the Russian nation have shifted from including the inhabitants of Russian territory to focusing on ethnic Russians exclusively, a parallel shift has occurred among Russia’s population. Those for whom standard Russian is the language of national identification ally themselves with Russia’s nationalist ideologies, while those who speak another language at home are inclined to feel alienated from these ideologies. Moscow’s attempts to unify a Russian public around the cause of war against a terrorist enemy has in fact served to cement divisions in public opinion and the objective social distance among Russian citizens. As a result of the second Chechen War, Tatars have begun to see their differences with “Russians” as irreconcilable.

Chechnya is pivotal to understanding the political field of perceived possibilities for national belonging in Russia. If the terrorist acts attributed to and committed by Chechens provide any valuable lessons, it is how desperate the question of who belongs to the Russian nation became under Putin’s rule. The Russian government asserted that it could not allow Chechnya to secede, since secession would incite other Russian regions to break away, thus implying that military action against Chechen rebels must continue in order to maintain Russian statehood. Consequently, while Chechen rebels do not have the option of seceding from the Russian Federation, individual Chechens no longer have any place in it. Similarly, Kazan’s Tatar-speakers, who feel a connection to Chechens through their shared religion and aspirations for sovereignty, also feel less and less that the Russian state is willing to accommodate them as full-fledged citizens.

The Role of the Media

Around 1999, the Russian government increased content censorship of Russian-language media. When television stations broadcast news critical of the war in Chechnya or any other Putin initiative, the Russian government would begin economic corruption charges against their owners, seizing control of the stations and the owners’ other assets. This is part of a concerted policy, according to *New Yorker* writer Michael Specter, to keep the airwaves criticism free.⁷ Because very few Russians read news-

papers since the excitement of perestroika ended and prices soared to reflect the real costs of production, the Russian government largely ignores what is printed in publications like Anna Politkovskaia's *Novaya Gazeta*. Even so, the mainstream Russian print media for the most part ceased criticizing the central government as soon as Putin assumed power. Indeed, a 2007 article by *St. Petersburg Times*' writer Galina Stolyarova reveals that newspaper journalists regularly receive detailed memos with precise instructions with regards to what stories to cover and how.⁸

In Tatarstan the situation has played out somewhat differently. Few, if any, Russian-identified people consume Tatar-language media. Consequently, what happens in the Tatar news is beyond the boundaries of their referential worlds and, to all intents and purposes, nonexistent. Moreover, unlike Russian-language television, which was riveting in the 1980s–1990s, Tatar-language television has by and large always been mind-numbingly dull. The only channel broadcasting in Tatar is the government station TRT, solid in its conservative, establishment orientation. However, the battle for sovereignty and the ongoing debates about how to realize it kept the Tatar-language press dynamic long after perestroika had been laid to rest. Perhaps because Shaimiev's government still harbored hopes of achieving sovereignty in 2000, censorship had not been fully extended to the Tatar-language media. Thus, at the time, in contrast to Russian sources, official Tatar-language publications framed Chechnya in terms of the unnecessary loss of life the war causes both Chechens and Russia's sons of all nationalities drafted to fight there. By 2006, the Tatar press had lost its vibrancy. Finding Tatar-language publications in Kazan had become extremely difficult and most of what was printed in Tatar had been stripped of political and ideological implications. In 2007, Tatar opposition journalists working in print media, radio, and online publications were targeted. They suffered increased harassment by the FSB (the KGB's new acronym) and received threatening telephone calls suggesting that they “not lose their heads.” One prominent opposition journalist was fired in October 2007 and another was mysteriously run over and killed by a hit-and-run driver around the same time.

Certainly, television and newspapers aren't the only information media available to Tatar-speakers. In fact, Tatar sociolinguist Zäitüna Iskhakova's work demonstrates that bilingual Tatars tend to read newspapers in Russian, but listen to Tatar radio.⁹ In the past, Tatar radio included the government-sponsored Tatar-language station channeled into the kitchen of every urban apartment for a low subscription price and the illicit Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Tatar-Bashkir Service, which has been on the

air since 1949. However, Tatar radio has changed dramatically over the past 10 years, with numerous commercial FM stations that play light-weight pop music springing into existence. In May 2005, the government-sponsored Tatar-language station was privatized and the old broadcasters were laid off. In-depth Tatar literary programs are no longer on the air. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) has come under threat as the Russian government attempts to ban FM stations from broadcasting foreign programming.¹⁰ While RFE/RL would continue to exist as an Internet service, people in Tatar villages, most of whom don't have access to functioning computers or the know-how to maintain them, would effectively be cut off from the alternative news source.

The Accumulated Experience

There is a Tatar saying, "Have a Russian friend, but keep an axe on your hip" that expresses the suspicion with which Tatars have learned to view friendly overtures from Russians. This suspicion can be visceral and involuntary, as I learned when a Tatar friend, seeing me dressed in a fur hat that made me look Russian, literally jumped back in alarm when I greeted him. As the Russian government dismantled sovereignty, this feeling of suspicion grew stronger and many Tatars have come to see their situation, living on earth surrounded by a Russian sea, in increasingly cynical terms. Thus, even though the Federation Council approved new legislation in July 2007, acknowledging Tatarstan's special status—allowing Tatars to carry Tatar-language inserts in their internal passports and requiring Tatarstan presidential candidates, hand-picked by the Russian president, to speak Tatar—the law which suffered long, heated passage through the Russian Duma is largely void of political substance. More indicative of the political climate in the Russian Federation, Putin's regime has reintroduced the Stalinist-period practice of show trials. Those found guilty of terrorism and jailed include Muslims participating in home prayer meetings and members of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society, among others.

Tatars' cynicism makes itself apparent in a shift from their prior inclusionary emphasis on linguistic competency in Tatar language to an exclusionary focus on religion and in-group marriage. In contrast to their prior conduct (1997–2001), when I stumbled over Tatar words during a 2006 visit to Kazan, most of my interlocutors immediately switched to Russian, reflecting an apparent sense of hopelessness that non-Tatars could learn to

speaking Tatar. And, a significant change from the Soviet period, when a quarter of marriages in Kazan were nationally mixed, Tatars now seem more inclined to marry other Tatars.

When, in 1999, I asked Tatar ethnographer Rosalinda Musina about mixed marriages, she said she thought the divorce rate was higher among people who had married outside their nationality, with a change taking place since the beginning of perestroika. Musina suggested that interest in single nationality marriages was increasing. She cited as reasons for this increase the fact that a spouse from a person's own nationality will observe familiar traditions and customs and know one's national language.

Musina is middle-aged and therefore grew up with the internationalist ideologies prevalent under Soviet rule. By contrast, Tatars in their mid-20s with whom I spoke seven years later in 2006 about mixed marriages expressed much more absolutist opinions. Over beer and savory crêpes at a new Internet café, Liliya, a former student from the Lab School, told me she had a girlfriend engaged to marry a Russian. She was worried about her friend to whom she had said of her choice, "I really love Dima, but I feel pity for you. *Aerym bulasyn*—you will be all alone." Later, I asked Altinay, one of Liliya's classmates, what she thought of mixed marriages. She responded without hesitation, "It's necessary to continue our kind. Who will the child be? What if the in-laws christen the child?" Both these young women chose to marry Tatar men, even though they speak more Russian than Tatar on a day-to-day basis.

From Language to Faith

Though language still has deep resonance for those Tatars attempting to preserve and revive Tatar culture, it no longer has a central role in Tatarstan's Muslim institutions. Study at Kazan's *mädräses*—Islamic higher education institutions—occurs at first in Russian and then later, as students acquire knowledge of the language, in Arabic. This is part of a concerted effort not to exclude Russian converts or Tatars with insufficient knowledge of Tatar language.¹¹

Because Islam is so central to Tatar identity, particularly in opposition to the Christianity associated with Russians, increasing Muslim religiosity illustrates how many Tatar-speakers' worldviews have diverged from those of people they identify as Russians. For many, being Tatar has come to entail observing or at least acknowledging the Islamic calendar, with

particular attention paid to the holy month of Ramadan. During Muslim holidays, even non-religious Tatars will respect Muslim traditions by observing the prohibition against drinking alcohol.

In 2000, before Putin cracked down on Tatarstan sovereignty, increased observance of Islam was particularly pronounced among people under the age of 30 whose upbringing mostly occurred during the period of increased freedom of speech initiated by Gorbachev's reforms. Since then, more Tatars who grew up under Soviet rule have sought refuge in religiosity. Islam's resurgence has affected the lives of all Tatarstan people—a frequent topic of discussion, it has unequivocally brought center stage values foreign to the official atheist doctrine of the Soviet period.¹²

Being a practicing Muslim requires not only the observance of annual rituals like fasting during Ramadan, but also adhering to other rites, most notably performing *namaz*—the five daily prayers. Religiosity therefore requires people to alter their everyday rhythms to conform to a concept of time different from the one previously dominant under state-imposed atheism.¹³ Observing Islam may also alter household structure. A Muslim household should only contain halal food, not necessarily easy to obtain living amid pork-loving Russians, and dog-owners are supposed to get rid of their pets. Moreover, Islam influences how people think about the future. For instance, a teenage girl at the Lab School, who covered her head when she went out in public, planned to go to university in the United Arab Emirates, where, she hoped, people on the street would not stare at her because she wore a headscarf.

The contemporary Shariq Club, founded in 1989 by members of TOTs as a meeting place for Tatar youth and modeled after its prerevolutionary predecessor, provides an example of how Islam has become an increasingly important marker of Tatariness. Though Shariq Club's leaders state that they prefer humanitarian Muslim values to the capitalist materialism they associate with western culture, the club's primary purpose has been secular—to provide a haven for Tatar students and young professionals to meet and learn more about their native culture from each other and from elder politicians, poets, singers and other cultural leaders. Shariq's members strongly emphasize language and the young people switch from their normal practice of speaking a mix of Tatar and Russian to talking in what is called *saf* [pure] Tatar language while attending Shariq's gatherings.¹⁴ Beginning in 2000, Shariq started honoring Ramadan by holding fast-breaking feasts, celebrating the holiday one evening that year, four evenings in 2007 and then every evening of the month in 2008, 2009 and 2010. However, Shariq Club's practice doesn't adhere to Tatar religious

norms—it's not the all-female *avuz achuy* members perform. Men are present during the entire ritual and celebration, and from the photographs posted on their website, it's apparent that few of the women participants dressed in Muslim modest dress.¹⁵

A loss of hope in their ability to create sustained political change or to live in freedom has caused many former nation-builders and other Tatars to increasingly turn to religion as a source of inspiration and refuge, to burrow deeper into Islamic teachings as a way to protect themselves from the outside world. When I returned to Kazan in 2006, I discovered that several middle-aged women I knew, raised under Soviet atheist rule, had become significantly more religious. They had begun attending Friday prayers at Kol Shārif Mosque and wearing Islamic attire. It was a surprise to visit these women at work and find them dressed in clothing radically different from what they had previously worn, especially since their new wardrobes made manifest their conservative religious beliefs and allegiance to a narrow segment of Tatarstan society.

One woman, Bibijan, worked in a government ministry. I went to her office to learn what new developments had occurred over the previous five years and found her wearing full hijab, with only her face and hands visible. We spoke for a while of official government matters. Bibijan seemed to lack her prior enthusiasm for her job and appeared uninterested in the state of affairs under her purview. I requested permission to ask a personal question. She acquiesced and I said, "In the time I knew you before, you didn't wear a scarf and now you do. Can you tell me about that?"

Immediately, Bibijan's face brightened and the light of her faith started to stream forth like a self-sustaining force. She wouldn't let me record the conversation and it was difficult to take notes or remember her words, caught up as I was in the momentous power of her religious charisma. The few notes I jotted down outline the following story. There was a terrible fire in Bibijan's apartment. Everything was burnt, down to the floorboard joists and the bricks in the walls. The only thing that survived was her Quran. It took three months to clean up the damage and as she cleaned, Bibijan's head was full of questions, the foremost being why the Quran survived the fire. With these questions on her mind, she would open her Quran to a page at random and find the answers on the very page she had opened to. During this period, she said, she absorbed the Quran's lessons, which she listed as follows:

It is important to live in the proper manner.
People must be treated with respect.
It is wrong to lose your temper.
All the prophets are necessary.
We are all Muslims.

In 2004, Bibijan had the opportunity to make the hadj. She didn't feel she was ready, but her niece Gulnaz urged her and then a sponsor for her trip appeared out of nowhere. Bibijan knew it was time to make the sacred journey. She put on the headscarf for the hadj and never took it off again, she explained, for two reasons. First, Allah says she should wear it, and second, it is a means of maintaining her health by protecting her internal energy from the outside world. As a bureaucrat employed by the Tatarstan government, Bibijan's awakening of faith exemplifies how former nation-builders have shifted their attention from the political to the religious.

Bibijan's revelation—the questions she had about why the world is unfair and her search for answers—is not an experience confined to her alone. Rather, the helplessness she felt sitting in her charred home is a small-scale depiction of the despair many Tatars feel as they reflect upon their place in the world. Without the ability to implement lasting political change, even in their daily interactions with Russians, many are withdrawing inward into a discursive world spiritually and ideologically configured in ways that bring comfort and provide meaning.

A New Spirit

Whether or not the cause is Kazan's Millennium, as the young journalist cited in the epigraph introducing Chapter 5 claims, or a coincidental series of processes, by 2006, Kazan was no longer the provincial city it had become under Soviet rule. The city's new spirit of cosmopolitanism revealed itself in many things. Cell phones had become ubiquitous. Old customs for arranging to meet people were discarded as the night-before verification phone call was replaced with, "Call me on my mobile when you want to meet." There was also a greater diversity in how people looked. Although some young men still walked around with right arms bandaged as a result of fistfight injuries, not all of them wore their hair uniformly short. Hipster fashion had caught on, especially among university students. Previously, tattoos had been homemade and indicated that a person had served prison time. After the Millennium, professionally needled upper-arm barbed wire bands and long shoulder tats adorned twenty-

something males, while symmetrical ink designs spanned the lower backs of some young women. Piercings had also become fashionable, particularly pierced navels. One of the girls from a Lab School Tatar class, at the time in her early 20s, showed up to our reunion with a pierced eyebrow. A few young women even noticeably began to dress according to an MTV-fashion, feminist-influenced model that does not conform to the reigning ex-Soviet standard that unrelentingly privileges ultra-femininity over comfort.

In addition to diversification in how Kazanians dress, a new speech genre had appeared. This is the marked Russian spoken by Tatars in their teens and twenties. Not the accent of native Tatar-speakers who had to learn the Russian language as adults in order to fit into Kazan society, these Tatars are perfectly fluent in the dominant language. Their spoken Russian lacks the pronounced nasality of standard Russian and is marked by a somewhat slow tempo and Tatar phonological influence. Consonants are softer—[ch] is pronounced as [sh] and the [a] in Russian “da” is pronounced as a front vowel. Their Russian speech recalls the way that many American Indians inflect their English, even if it is the only language they speak.¹⁶

Beyond this, a visible spread of wealth meant that more and more cars crowded Kazan’s streets. As before, there were too few traffic lights and crosswalks at busy intersections. Previously, drivers would hold their courses, even if pedestrians walked directly in their paths. By 2006, they were more likely to slow down or stop, treating other Kazanians more like their fellows. People on foot in Kazan have always exhibited this kind of patience, so this change in behavior may simply indicate that more pedestrians had the money to drive cars, when previously only the small segment of “New Russians,” known for their over-the-top vulgarity, could afford automobiles built for speed.¹⁷ This change in drivers’ behavior seemed to mark a growth in Kazan’s middle class. Increased wealth also meant that goods sold in markets, which used to be grown locally or elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, were often the product of distant trade. For instance, I went to central food bazaar to buy fruit in June 2006 and the apples I purchased from a Tatar merchant turned out to be Braeburns imported from New Zealand.

The Tatarstan government has poured millions of rubles into making Tatar culture attractive. Most visible are the expensive alterations to Kazan’s façade in preparation for the 2005 Millennium celebrations, described in Chapter 5. Along with these building projects, in proper Soviet style, the Tatarstan government sponsors colorful holidays as a tactic to

win over public opinion. The most popular of these is Sabantuy. Originally a pre-Islamic spring celebration, much like the Central Asian holiday Nauryz that occurs in March, Sabantuy is now observed in June.¹⁸ Sabantuy marks the completion of the summer planting with festivities that demonstrate contestants' strength, endurance, and dexterity. The festivities traditionally include public displays of physical prowess—greased pole-climbing contests, races with contestants balancing raw eggs on wooden spoons held in their mouths, tugs of war, three-legged races, and Tatar wrestling matches in which the winner or *batir* is rewarded with a live sheep, which he ceremoniously drapes over his shoulders. Once a regional celebration, in the 19th century Sabantuy developed into an all-Tatar festivity. By the late 20th century, Sabantuy had become a holiday enjoyed by all.¹⁹

Formerly, each of Kazan's districts sponsored its own local celebration. In 2006, the city government instituted a large-scale Sabantuy at the *Yanga Ippodrom*, to which I was invited as a part of a delegation of honored guests. (Former Russian President Boris Yeltsin attended as well, though he sat a story above my group in the invitation-only pavilion, literally at a higher level in the honor hierarchy.) It was a gargantuan affair, free to the general public and lasting from 10 in the morning till six in the evening. The main arena was an enormous sound stage covered in astro-turf with a backdrop of cartoon Tatar village houses. At all times, two or three acts were performing simultaneously in the center of the arena, while horse races took place in a distant right hand corner. In the first hour of the exposition, dancing troupes costumed as trees, chickens, break-dancers, acrobats, samovars, monkeys in Tatar national dress, lady bugs, children's toys, angels, and butterflies came out on the field one after the other in quick succession. At the same time, there were rushes of bicyclists and motorcyclists, a chariot race, a costumed tug-of-war, and, off to one side, men climbing a greased pole. Professional dancers in costumes representing Tatarstan's different nationalities—costumes the Soviet government determined for each nationality during the 1920s state-building period—performed traditional dances with great verve.²⁰ The scene was overwhelming in its profusion of color and activity, particularly since the temperature was 100 degrees Fahrenheit. After an hour of watching these exuberant performances, some of my fellow guests decided to explore the fairgrounds and we left our glassed-in pavilion for the outdoor heat.

Once outside, we discovered a sun-saturated world filled with thousands of people milling about exploring a World's Fair-like exposition. The fairgrounds had been divided into sections, each representing a spe-

cific region of Tatarstan, save the generic “*Rusaskaia derevnia*” or Russian Village. Each regional section held a stage with musicians performing local songs, people milling about in local costumes and food stands with goods for sale. One section held a pen with farm animals waiting to be petted and another hosted a miniature pond populated with live fish. The exposition provided an opportunity for each region to competitively display the fruits of its labors in a manner that recalled Soviet-period public exhibitions. One of my companions explained that what we were seeing resembled Sabantuy in large villages, where each *kolkhoz* or collective farm has a stand to show off and sell goods. A few hours later, sated after wandering around under the hot sun, lunching on lamb kebab with ketchup, drinking beer and eating ice cream, we called our driver from a cell phone and left the celebration. The streets of the city were empty of all but a few pedestrians. Everyone was at Sabantuy.

Another government-endorsed event, albeit narrower in scope, occurring at the same time as Sabantuy was the Second All-World Tatar Youth Forum. The Forum included a number of journalists and 584 delegates from Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Örenberg, Penza, Moldova, Crimea, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, China, Spain, and the US. The delegates were responsible for paying their travel to Kazan, but the Forum’s official sponsor, the Tatar World Congress, which received financial support from two Tatar bankers and the Tatarstan government, provided housing in dormitories and hotels and all meals during the four-day event. The Tatar World Congress also covered the costs of the delegates’ local transportation to Forum events including a trip to Kyrilai, the native village of the most celebrated Tatar poet, Gabdullah Tukay, several hours from Kazan in the Archa Region. Altogether we filled 10–12 large tour buses. In addition to visiting Kyrilai, participants attended a presentation of a new series of books the History Institute was publishing on Tatar history; listened to a special Sabantuy concert; participated in a conference on contemporary problems in Tatar culture; had an excursion around the Kremlin; attended Friday prayers at Kol Şärif Mosque; went to Kazan’s Sabantuy celebrations; and staged a Gala Concert in which a few dozen Forum delegates performed. The Forum’s acknowledged purposes were to instill in far-flung Tatars pride and knowledge of their native culture and to introduce young Tatars to each other so that they might marry and produce Tatar children. The Forum also had political implications, as presenters like Fäüzia Bäyrämova pronounced, “We have built the foundation of a Tatar government, but it rests with you to put on the roof. Struggle for an independent Tatar government!”

The delegates were a diverse group of people. Except for the two Spaniards, who tried to communicate in English with little success, everyone spoke Russian and many spoke Tatar. Most were university students, although some were still in high school. Though not all spoke Tatar, they were all cultural activists and members of Tatar groups, which is how the Tatar World Congress identified them as likely participants. As a group, they were good-natured, curious, and well mannered.

In fact, the only quietly visible point of tension among the delegates was the division between the dozen or so conservative Muslims and everyone else. This first became evident at the Sabantuy celebration organized for participants in Kushlauvich Village, close to Tukay's native village Kyrlai. There we ate a dinner of tasty plov cooked outdoors over a fire in large metal kazans, accompanied by apples, dried apricots, cookies and copious cups of hot tea. Then, a concert was staged on the village green. A young Tatar pop star performed and people danced on the grass in front of her. On one side of the green there was a hill on top of which eight or ten female delegates wearing headscarves—one of whom was in blue jeans and a shirt that exposed her midriff—stood and watched from a distance while everyone else moved about with great abandon. This tension became more palpable on the last day of the Forum, during the Gala Concert. Several female delegates performed belly dances and one young woman from Crimea slinked suggestively as she sang a siren song. During these performances the women wearing headscarves and a few of the men averted their gazes from the stage, tangibly withdrawing from the group. One couple got up and walked out of the auditorium in the middle of a performance. The withdrawal from the group's activities by the conservative Muslims is incongruous with habitual Tatar social behavior, revealing a conflict between disparate norms for being a proper Muslim and an ideal Tatar.

Since 2000, young Tatars have begun creating Tatar-language protest music. The music is by necessity underground, since the Tatarstan government has banned from the FM radio stations songs that do not fit the happy-go-lucky formula of idealized village life. Even so, when I attended a Tatar disco at *Tugan Avylym* in 2006, everyone knew the lyrics of Ilsiye Bădrătin's song *Bez* (which describes another "we") and sang along at the top of their lungs—monglessly—when the dj played it.

We are a great people, they say, Our mark is on history, they say, From the time of the prophets We come, they said with conviction. Today, we are finished, they say, We have passed our glorious period, they say, The Ivans are guilty, they say, We live in regret. In the cemetery of the great khans Feed for a flock of sheep is found, Tatar blood is discovered on the ground, A strange eagle feather waves, Sand has covered the open steppe, The great khans died long ago. We are foreigners to ourselves, We are creatures sold by Tängri.	Böyek xalıq bit bez, diyep, Tarixta bezneng ez diyep, Päygämbärlär zamaninnan Kilä, dip yshany. Bügen, inde bettek, diyep, Shanly chorny üttek, diyep, Ivannar gäyeple, diyep Yäshibez uftany. Böyek xannar ziratında Sarıq kötüve jim taba. Tatar kany tamgan jirdä Gärıp börket kanat kaga. Irken dalany kom kümgän, Böyek xannar küptän ülgän. Üz-üzebezgä yatlar bez, Tängrene satkan zatlar bez.
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Figure 8.3. Lyrics to First Verse of *Bez* (We)²¹

Despite the loss of financial support from arrested Russian business tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Üzebez, the loose confederation of young urban Tatar-speakers that calls itself the “movement of the new generation,” founded in 2005, continued to hold its annual “*Min tatarcha söläshäm* (I speak Tatar!)” actions to coincide with the birthday of Tatar poet Gabdullah Tukay. Held on Bauman Street on April 26 from 2006–2010, the actions include concerts and Tatar karaoke, and in 2010, active participation by the Tatar World Congress, the Tatar Youth Forum, and the Tatarstan Ministry of Culture. Üzebez has popularized the action by staging contests in 2008 and 2009 in which participants organized their own mini-actions—the winner received an award and prizes during the big April 26 event.²² As a result, mini-actions have been staged in two of Kazan’s largest department stores—Kolt’so and MEGA (the latter owned and operated by IKEA). MEGA suggested that the merchants renting retail space in the complex try speaking Tatar at work too. As a result, in several stores’ glass front windows, alongside the stickers indicating which credit cards are accepted, some retailers also display Üzebez’s “*Min tatarcha söläshäm*” sticker—a means of attracting Tatar-speaking customers. Another mini-action involved schoolchildren from a village outside Kazan, who greeted incoming passengers on an international flight to Kazan’s airport with Tatar songs and dance. In the neighboring republic of Mari-El, Tatars staged a “*Min tatarcha söläshäm*” action and subsequently Mari-speakers organized their own “I Speak Mari” action. In the

absence of private backing, Üzebez has begun to receive support from the Tatar World Congress and the Tatarstan Ministry of Education and Science. As a result, Azerbaijani participants in Kazan's Third Tatar World Congress Forum for Youth staged a "*Min tatarcha söläshäm*" action in Baku at the Tatarstan Government Representative in September 2008 during Ramadan, which included dispersal of "I Speak Tatar" badges and dictionaries of *My First 150 Words of Tatar*, and Tatar cuisine served as part of the fast-breaking feast.

That same month, September 2008, Üzebez hosted an iftar feast at Shariq Club, which they described on their blog as follows:

The movement's participants have undertaken the gargantuan task of creating an urban Tatar youth subculture that answers the needs and spiritual requirements of our young people....Of course the road is long, thorny, difficult, but also crucially necessary. All those gathered were in agreement with this thesis. This monolithic agreement allows us to regard our future with hope. For the question of consolidation and uniting in the Tatar community is no less crucial. Another task the movement's coordinators set themselves is seeking out and generating a new cohort of Tatar leaders who by their conception should develop into the Tatar nation's new élite. We underline that we mean a genuine élite in the authentic and not in the bourgeois sense of the word. This elite needs to "lead" Tatars into contemporary society without losing its own ethnic face. Tatars must endure the cruel grasp of globalization and processes that annihilate ethnic particularities and emerge victorious.²³

The reference to globalization recalls Safin's treatise in *Tatar yuly*.

Üzebez has grown tremendously since being established by just three people in August 2005. They regularly host roundtables on problems in the Tatar-language press, organize concerts of alternative Tatar music artists, including Ilsiye Bädrätin and the rap group Ittifaq named after Fäüzia Bäyrämovä's political party, and stage parties focused on tasting and learning how to make popular Tatar delicacies. In 2008, they began to solicit the Russian government to give Tatar the status of Russia's second government language. They are pleased with the noise this initiative has made in the media and the Russian Duma. Using new technologies such as the Internet (blogging, YouTube videos, and Facebook postings) and consumerism (patronizing stores where clerks will speak Tatar with them and working on creating a "Tatar brand" to attract tourists to Tatar culture) this new generation has taken significant steps to unite various Tatar groups and encourage other ethnic minorities, such as the Mari, to stand up for the right to speak their native languages in public spaces. An off-spring of Shariq Club, and with some shared membership, Üzebez's lead-

ers embrace egalitarianism and niche marketing in ways that sets them apart from the mass political movement of their village-born elders. They embody Kazan's new spirit.

Parting Words

The USSR's collapse exposed Russia's demographic crisis. It suddenly became evident that the country's "European" population was shrinking fast—the result of severe alcoholism, deaths from heart failure, high rates of abortion and miscarriage, and, eventually, emigration. Rates of HIV/AIDS exploded on former Soviet territory, as women and girls often found the only way to survive is through prostitution: whether as mistresses, streetwalkers, *sekretutkas* or trafficked slaves.²⁴ Yeltsin's slovenly drunken rule helped to further destabilize the country. His key blunders include his botched economic reforms known as "shock therapy," which impoverished the masses and allowed Communist Party apparatchiks to personally benefit from the privatization of Russia's most lucrative industries; shelling the Russian White House in 1993 to push his constitution through parliament; his failed war in Chechnya (1994–1996); the continual devaluing of the ruble, especially in the August 1998 economic crisis, which caused many ex-Soviet citizens to lose their faith in a better future along with their carefully accumulated savings; back wages unpaid for months and even years to teachers, factory workers, and other employees fundamental to Russia's everyday operation; and the penury of begging pensioners who couldn't even afford bread. All this chaos created fertile ground for the establishment of Vladimir Putin's order-seeking government in 2000.

Since Putin began the second Chechen War in 1999 a menacing pall of anxiety has hung over Russian people of all nationalities, whether or not they acknowledge it. The type of shadow it casts, though always one of fear, varies depending upon how individuals situate themselves within the structures they traverse and which alliances they choose to make. For instance, for mothers, fathers and schoolteachers, it can take the form of repressed grief that the boys they raise will become soldiers and may die in the army if they can't pass their university entrance exams. For some, it manifests itself as an ever-present fear of terrorism and kidnappings committed by Chechens and other "Caucasian types." For others, it is the chronic anxiety of persecution, as unidentified government forces give them "warnings" to desist from certain activities or the police engage in

racial profiling. For others still, the anxiety takes the form of generalized xenophobia that pervades their daily existence.

As a result of Putin's pressure and the concessions he demanded from Russia's regions, Tatarstan sovereignty no longer exists as a political movement. The majority of Tatar-speakers have lost hope in the possibility of changing their society into one more equitable than that which existed during the Soviet period. Because they feel they lost so much then and regained relatively little since the USSR began to crumble in 1989, they often suffer more from the anxiety and despair affecting Russia's population as a whole. These feelings have manifested themselves in two different trends—an exponential increase in religiosity (which is indeed pervasive across former Soviet territory) and the targeted activism of a new generation of 20-something Internet-savvy Tatar-speakers proud of their language and culture. What these two trends mean for Russia's future development as a multi-national state is unclear, though it is unlikely that a peaceful transition towards inclusive pluralism will occur in the foreseeable future. Even so, the deep social effects of Tatarstan's political movement for sovereignty prevail, at least for the time being.

Notes

- 1 Under Soviet rule such a demonstration would have been shut down in a matter of minutes. See Alexeeva (1990).
- 2 Mari are Finnic-speaking animists and Chuvash are Orthodox Christian Turkic-speakers, both indigenous to the Middle Volga Region.
- 3 Vaisov and Imamov (1993); Gaffar (1991), for example.
- 4 There is some speculation that Putin's own FSB planted the bombs (Feifer 2009).
- 5 Even so, Kazan Tatars were always quick to point out, Russian-identified people in Tatarstan are more moderate in their attitudes towards other nationalities than Russians elsewhere.
- 6 Before US anthropologists could freely conduct research in Russia, Paul Friedrich (1979) analyzed Russian fiction to study how pronoun use reveals relative social distance between characters and relations of power and solidarity (Brown and Gilman 1960).
- 7 Specter (2007).
- 8 Stolyarova (2007).
- 9 Iskhakova (1999).
- 10 The BBC lost its broadcast permit for Russia in 2008. "‘Wall Street Journal’ Letter Highlights Russia's Crackdown on International Media." *RFE/RL In The News*. February 1, 2008
- 11 Thanks to Liliya Karimova for this information.

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- 12 While some Soviet Muslims practiced Islam to a lesser or greater extent, they did so clandestinely.
- 13 See Poliakov (1992).
- 14 See Wertheim (2003, 2006) on *saf tatar tele* and other purist Tatar language ideologies. Shariq Klub's meetings occur weekly when it is not under pressure from the authorities not to hold meetings.
- 15 See <http://aralash.ru/photos/20/1035> for images from Shariq Klub's 2009 iftar gatherings.
- 16 See Leap (1993) for a thorough analysis of the features and variations within American Indian English.
- 17 Humphrey (2002).
- 18 Sabantuy celebrations occur throughout the month of June. First, villages host festivities, then Tatarstan's towns, followed by its cities, and finally, the capital Kazan celebrates the holiday.
- 19 Indeed, a Ukrainian pupil in the Lab School's Russian class (who supported the war in Chechnya) claimed she loved going to celebrate Sabantuy with a Tatar friend in the friend's home village.
- 20 See Petrone (2000) for a full account of Soviet national celebrations during the Stalinist period and the creation of national costumes for these displays.
- 21 Thanks to Vagiz Sultanbikov for help translating *Bez*.
- 22 Üzebez states that goals of the mini-action contest are as follows: broadening the spheres in which Tatar is spoken, raising the language's status and attracting young people to the values of Tatar culture (www.uzebez.org).
- 23 Again, see www.uzebez.org.
- 24 *Sekretutka* is a combination of the Russian words for "secretary" and "prostitute."

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